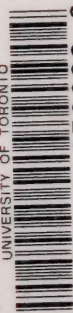


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HOME LIFE IN IRELAND

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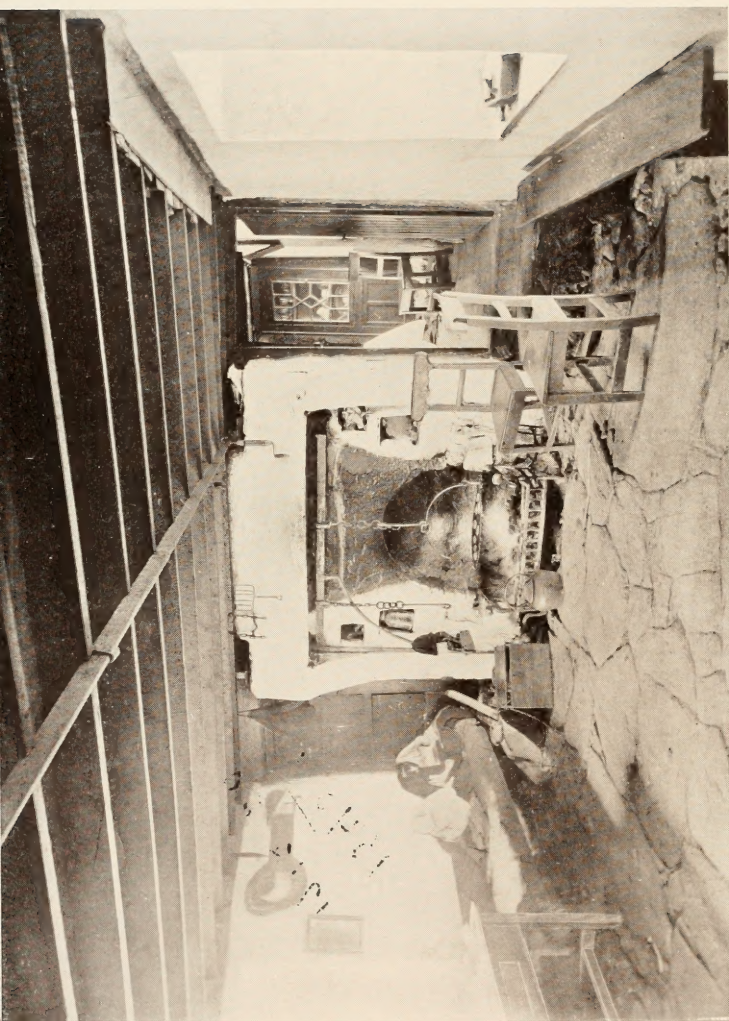
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FARM-HOUSE INTERIOR.

HOME LIFE IN IRELAND

BY
ROBERT LYND

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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SYLVIA LYND



PREFACE

I WISH to thank Mrs N. F. Dryhurst and Mr J. W. Good for the help they gave me at various points while I was writing this book—help all the more generous because neither of them is likely to agree with all I say. Pádraic Ó Coinceannáin will perhaps recognise something like the echo of his voice in one of the chapters. Mr and Mrs Robert Steen may not see the image of their kindness reflected in these pages, but it is none the less there, for it was in their house and in the house at Killure that I received the most abundant hospitality I have known, and was initiated into the friendship of country people and places.

R. L.

September 1909.



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HOME LIFE IN IRELAND

CHAPTER I

THE IRISHMAN : INTRODUCTORY

THE Irishman is one of the world's puzzles. People seem to be quite unable to agree as to who he is, or as to what constitutes his Irishness. Some people say that he is a Celt. Some say he is a Catholic. Some say he is a comic person. Some say he is a melancholy person. Others say he is both. According to some, he is of a gay, generous nature. According to others, he is a shrivelled piece of miserliness and superstition. "The least criminally-inclined of all the inhabitants of Europe," declare those who stand up for him, and they have official statistics on their side. A murderer, a maimer of cattle, a carder of women's hides, squeal the Kiplingesque school of critics, and they, too, have official statistics—very official statistics—on their side. A missionary among the nations, affirm some religious enthusiasts. The buffoon of the world, cry those who are less likely to be found in a church than in a music-hall.

The truth is, there is a great deal of nonsense

talked about the "real Irishman" and the "typical Irishman"—to mention two phrases common among thoughtless people. The "real Irishman" is neither essentially a Celt nor essentially a Catholic. He is merely a man who has had the good or bad fortune to be born in Ireland or of Irish parents, and who is interested in Ireland more than in any other country in the world.

The landlord of Norman or Saxon descent is quite as truly an Irishman as the tenant-farmer of Gaelic descent, provided that Ireland is the home of his best thoughts, even if not always of his body. The Orange labourer of the north, whose ancestors may have come from Scotland, has all the attributes of an Irishman no less than the Catholic labourer of the west, whose ancestors may have come from Greece, or from Germany, or from Spain, or from anywhere you care to speculate. Occasionally, owing to political bitter-nesses, you will find a Northerner denying his Irishness. "We're English in the north," a Derry merchant once said to me, and indeed some of these people have sung "God save the King" so often since the introduction of Mr Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill that their blood now refuses to flow to any other music, and their ears are deaf to the songs of their own valleys and hills. Even people with Gaelic names are to be found now and then denying the charge of being Irish with a vigour worthy of Peter's denial of the accusation of being a Christian. A

THE IRISHMAN : INTRODUCTORY 3

friend of mine, who is an enthusiast for Irish things, was wandering about Tyrone some time ago, when he fell into talk in a hotel-bar with a labouring man who gave his name as James M'Cabe. "Well, you have a good Irish name, at any rate," my friend said to him in a tone of congratulation. "Good Irish name be damned," retorted the other, bursting into a temper. "It's a good Protestant name."

Luckily, this kind of talk is becoming rarer in Ireland every day. It is a relic of the days of the religious wars of the Tudors and the Stuarts when Catholicism and Irishism were both put on their defence in Ireland, and as a result became somewhat confused till they appeared to be practically the same thing. The Protestant religion came into Ireland, not as a phase of Christianity, but as the religion of foreign invaders. Consequently, among the Irish people, Protestant and foreigner came to mean the same thing, and in the older-fashioned Irish language they are denoted by the same word—Gall. Similarly, Gaedheal or Gael came to signify, not only an Irishman of the Gaelic stock, but an Irishman of the Catholic religion.

I remember once when I was in County Sligo I was taken to see a herdsman who knew Irish, in order that I might listen to a man with so fortunate a possession, and I found that to him Gael meant, not an Irishman at all, but a Catholic. We were talking about Irish things over a sip

of whiskey with which he filled two small delf cups to the brim, leaving no room for the least drop of water, and I was telling him how even manufacturers and business people now recognise the importance of the language. In proof of this I brought out from my pocket a box of Dublin-made matches, with the words, "Solus na nGaedheal"—"The Light of the Gael"—printed on the outside. He took the box from me, and looked it up and down—I did not know that he could not read when I handed it to him—and then he gave it back to me, saying that he hadn't his spectacles on him, and would I mind reading what was on it to him. I read the words carefully, "Solus na nGaedheal," feeling very nervous about my accent, and he said, "Ah, that means 'The Light of the Catholics.'" At this, the school-master who had brought me looked both surprised and shocked, for he was the most generous and hospitable of men. "But, John," he protested, "it can't mean that, Mr Lynd himself is a Protestant." "Well," declared the herdsman, with a kindly twinkle in his eye, but determination in his jaw, "he's none the worse for that. There's many a good Protestant Irishman. But that doesn't change the meaning of words, and I tell you Gaedheal means Catholic." I think, indeed, if he had wished to say "Irishman" in the Irish language he would have used the word, "Éireannach."

It is curious to find even to-day in Ireland

an occasional person of one idea who will tell you that nobody is any use except the Gaels, or that nobody is any use except the Catholics, or that nobody is any use except the Ulstermen. As a rule, people who talk like this belong to an old and dwindling school, and are of a crankish nature. The general trend of Irish thought during the past number of years has made for the breaking-down of all such barriers of mistrust and misunderstanding. I heard from a national platform an ancient man of wild notions call upon his audience on one occasion to put no trust in Protestants—"they will betray you, they always have betrayed you"—and passionately proclaim that Ireland must look for salvation to the "sea-divided Gael" alone. His audience, however, greeted his sentiments with no enthusiasm, but maintained a polite approach to silence. Similarly, I have heard an Ulsterman—ridiculously enough, a Catholic and a Nationalist too—speak as though all the southern Irish were worthless people. "Between you and me and the man in the moon," he said once, tapping me on the knee confidentially, "there's not much worth talking about south of the Boyne." Of course, one finds these local and sectional conceits and contempts in all countries. In England, for instance, the Baptist does not always speak flatteringly of the Methodist, nor does the Churchman usually speak flatteringly of either. Manchester and Liverpool are not linked together in a mutual admiration

society, and the Yorkshireman is not a permanent object of veneration to the Londoner. In the same way, there are Tories who deny the right of the Radicals to call themselves patriotic Englishmen, and Radicals who think equally bitter things of the Tories, and Socialists who place Radicals and Tories in one basket of worthlessness. In England, however, these differences of creed and outlook are regarded as normal, and are not counted for national unrighteousness. In Ireland, on the other hand, let one man speak critically of another, and immediately we have lurid pictures drawn for us of a people with a genius for dissensions and fighting, as though differences of opinion were a thing unknown in civilised countries. Political necessities—to give a flattering name to a bad thing—have led to every fault of Ireland's being seen as if through a microscope, and to every virtue's being seen upside down or inside out till it seemed equal to two faults. Personally, I deny the existence of any gulfs between different sections of the inhabitants of Ireland which need prevent us from regarding them as one people, just as we regard the English or the French or the Italians as one people.

This belief in the oneness of the Irish people will colour everything I write in this book. For, great as are the differences between the people of one province and the people of another, between the people of one creed and the people of another, between the people of one parish and the people of

another, the things which unite them and mark them as belonging to one ever-evolving race are more numerous and more remarkable still. The Cork man and the Belfast man realise this when they meet in a foreign country. In England, for instance, they feel some bond of fraternity uniting them to each other different from any bond that may unite them to the Englishman or Scotchman or Frenchman, or any other of the strange races. They are both Irish, and, even if they have not the same friendly interests, they have at least the same things to quarrel over—no unimportant tie in a world where most people persist in living dully. Consequently, when I hear a Belfastman speaking contemptuously of Dublin, I do not take the conversation very seriously, and when I hear a Dubliner speaking contemptuously of Belfast, I do not take the conversation very seriously. The kind of Irishman who does really offend me is the Belfastman, who speaks contemptuously of Belfast, and his counterparts from other parts of Ireland. Everybody has met the escaped Belfastman in foreign countries, who delights in depreciating his own town, because he thinks that it is the right thing to do. I have almost invariably found him a useless person with all the faults of his birth-place and few of the virtues. He has never felt the heart-beat of Ireland or the thrill of abundant life that makes the laughter of children in Ballymena of one spirit with the singing of birds above the beggars on Granard door-steps,

and with the shrill shouts of boys hurling in a Munster field when a goal is scored.

My theme, then, in this book will be the people of Ireland and their oneness—oneness of customs and character and interests and even of language traditions—their oneness, and, within the circle of that, their curious variableness. The Irishman of the North merges into the Irishman of the Midlands, and he into the Irishman of the South and West, as naturally as a similar phenomenon takes place in England. If you travel by easy stages from the Giant's Causeway to Cape Clear you will notice how beautifully and gradually the Scotticised accent of Antrim and Down undergoes change after change until it is transformed into the bubbling brogue of Cork. It is the same, if you take the Irish, instead of the Anglo-Irish, language. There are numerous differences of accent—dialects we call them in Ireland—but these surface differences are as nothing compared to the essential unity of speech that links the four provinces together. Country people, who have not travelled, are, of course, inclined to stress these differences. If you go to Connacht with a Munster accent, you need not be surprised to be told that your Irish is not Irish at all, and if you take a Connacht turn of speech to Ulster, some grey-headed old woman will as likely as not shake her head at you, and tell you that Connacht Irish is bad Irish. These are comedies, however, which will always be with us so long as individual patterns remain among

countries and men. I know my arguments could be used—or misused—to support a good many theories which I do not wish them to support. But, as a matter of fact, I put them forward in proof, not so much of the positive things in which I believe, as of some negations which will clear the way for the understanding of those positive things. I wish then merely to enforce the idea that Ireland is not a country scored and riven internally by impassable frontier lines—that the common talk of the “two nations” in Ireland is an exaggeration, and leads to confused thinking about the country. I hope to touch on this point more fully, however, in later pages of the book.

There is a nursery-rhyme in Ireland which runs :—

Ulster for a soldier,
 Connacht for a thief,
 Munster for learning,
 And Leinster for beef.

There is just as much sense in this as in most of the generalisations we hear about the different parts of Ireland—the dourness of Ulster, the dishonesty of Connacht, the idleness of at least the other two provinces. Almost all generalisations, I suppose, were in the beginning born of some seed of truth. Nearly all the generalisations about Ireland, however, have grown up into perverted and lying shapes, like monstrous light-hiding trees, and in their branches the parrots of the nations chatter innumerable foolish things.

CHAPTER II

FARMS AND FARMERS

I MET a lady the other day who became very sorrowful over the condition of living into which the Irish farmer has now fallen. She recalled the days of her girlhood, when the house of the large farmer was a centre of hospitality and of a certain kind of culture. In those days it was not a surprising thing to see a new book—even a good book—on a farmer's table. Nowadays, one is astonished to see any new written matter there, except "The Freeman's Journal" or "The Northern Whig," or one of those useless series of volumes on religion or history, of which book-pedlars contrive to get rid on the instalment system.

This lady's lamentation, I believe, had a heart of truth in it. It was not merely the regret of one who saw the past in rose-colour and the present through a grey rain of dullness. If you go into an old farm-house, the books that you see stored away in some shabby case, and the prints that you see hanging on the walls, tell you that a generation of men once lived here, who, if not supermen of taste, were at least giants in this respect compared with those who have come after them.

The Irish farmer, indeed, the respectable son of the ragged soldier of the land wars, is a failure in the matter of fine living. When, instead of being the respectable son, he is the respectable transmutation of the ragged land soldier, his case is little better. I use the word "ragged," let me say, in praise of good fighting, and not in any belittling sense, for, like most of the talking sort of people, I prefer rags to selfish respectability. And selfish respectability is the danger which at the present moment more than any other threatens the delightfulness and human richness of Irish country life.

Of course, it is impossible to make a true generalisation that will cover all the farmers of Ireland. For an Irish farmer may be anything from a private gentleman on a small scale to a labouring man on a large one. Farmers and farmers' families make up the greater part of the varied population of Ireland. There are in the country nearly 600,000 farm holdings of all shapes and sizes, and it has been estimated by a writer who takes the average family as consisting of five persons, that about 75 per cent. of the population are directly dependent upon the soil. Consequently, it will be seen that, if the country life of Ireland is decadent and dull, the entire life of the nation is in peril of decadence and dullness.

Personally, I believe that it is the better-off farmers who are most in danger of losing the colour out of their lives. Suddenly finding

themselves in possession of their own land, or at least with a good prospect of possessing their own land, after a struggle of many generations, they are like men who have come upon a fortune, and are in dread that some neighbour should hear of it, and cast an envious eye on it. They feel now that their crops are their own, that their cattle are their own, that their money is their own, in a way that was never so before. They have arrived in the Utopia towards which their fathers strove as, outside Heaven, the chief end of man, and they wish to rest for a while and enjoy the sweets of it. Like the farmers in Mr Shaw's play, "John Bull's Other Island," they just want things to be left as they are, without change, without disturbance. I was talking to a County Mayo farmer some time ago, who declared in a whirl of not very sensible language: "I was always an extreme man, but I don't believe in going to extremities." It was the protest of one of the contented "haves" against the boycotting and cattle-driving practices of some of the discontented "have-nots."

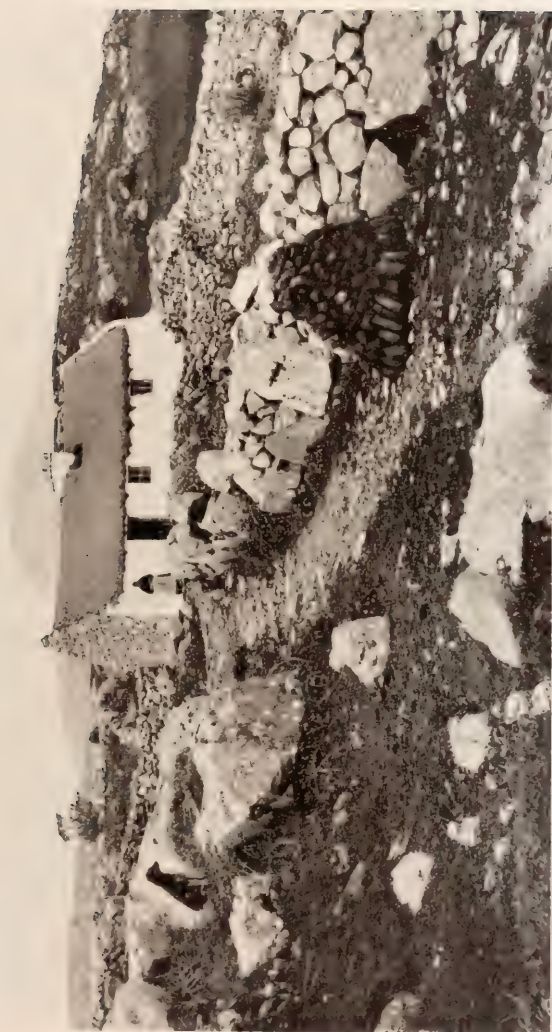
He affirmed that men of property had now no say in the management of the country—that public life was in the hands of a "lot of lads and tramps." He said that he would like to see the return of the old system under which country government was in the hands of the grand juries instead of, as at present, the County Councils. He pointed to the road outside his house, and declared that, under the old grand jury, this used

to cost £14 a year for maintenance—£14, if I remember, for six or eight miles, but that now under the County Council it was, how much? I guessed twenty pounds, then thirty. “Fifty-five,” he declared, fixing his disgusted withered face on me; “fifty-fifty pounds.” I said that, perhaps, the road was better, but the suggestion made him twist his neck as though he were choking. As I looked at the little hedge of white beard that wandered round his throat, and his figure knotted in the chair, and his peevish old eyes, I seemed to see in him the tragedy of a revolutionary—a revolutionary who had aimed too low and got even a little more than he desired. He was like a once-starving man, who, being suddenly well-fed, thought it irrational that anybody else should go on complaining of starvation.

This old farmer is typical of a good many of his class. I do not mean in his attitude to the County Councils—most farmers will admit the virtues of these—but in his general conversation. The truth is, the Irish farmer has been demoralised by three great forces—by the education given in the National Schools, by landlordism, and by agrarian politics. The schools de-Irishised him and so robbed him of a sort of culture, which made the air about him exhilarating and the land a land of memories and enriching thoughts. Agrarian politics, taking the place of national politics, have trained him to be a self-seeker, a materialist, looking outside his own country to a foreign Parliament

for the beginnings of justice, and, if not for the beginnings of justice, for doles. Landlordism, again, by fining him for every effort he made after better things, by appropriating all the fruits of his labour as far as was in its power, trained him to cultivate an idle, shiftless, untidy air, and to avoid the very appearance of prosperity.

Ireland is in the result an untidy-looking country, a country of untidy houses, of untidy stone walls and hedges, of untidy fields. In many parts if a gate is broken down, as likely as not it will be fixed up temporarily with bits of rope, or with the help of stones or thorn branches, instead of being properly repaired. Similarly, if a window is broken or a spout injured, some hopelessly inefficient steps will often be taken to stave off the critical day when a new window must be put in or the spout properly seen to. People who do not examine into the causes of things look upon this untidiness of the country-side as a deep-seated Irish characteristic, born of Irish blood rather than of Irish conditions. There could not be a shallower thought. The Irish farmer originally became untidy in self-defence. He knew that, if his house looked beautiful and his hedges trim, the quick eye of the land-agent would soon size him up as a prosperous man, and raise his rent accordingly. Ever since the 1881 Land Act enabled him to stand up to the rent-raising landlord with some prospect of success—certainly since the beginning of the present century—there has been a slow but



SMALL COUNTY DOWN FARM.

sure tendency to improvement in the appearance of Irish farms and farm-houses. If the tendency has been too slight and slow for the censorious, it is because the traditions of generations cannot suddenly be made as though they were not, and because the farmer continued to suspect, even under the 1881 Land Act, that the landlord still reaped no small benefit from the tenant's improvements.

Now that the land is coming into his own hands, the Irish farmer is showing, as I have stated, a wonderful instinct for improving his surroundings. The farms themselves are still shaggy—I say shaggy rather than shabby—in appearance, but the houses, especially the houses of the small farmers, are beginning to wear a new air of brightness and prosperity.

One thing that will strike you about the houses in most parts of the country—it will strike you especially forcibly if you have listened with an attentive ear to all the old falsehoods about Ireland—is their cleanliness. I do not mean that they are as clean as a new pin or as some of those spick-and-span hydrangia-guarded cottages in North Wales. But they are clean beyond all the conceptions of nearly all the people who have ever written about Ireland. Ireland has always been set down as a country of dirty houses, as though people living in London or Manchester ought to feel almost unwell at the thought of it. The picture is a false one. I am sure there is more

dirt in London or in Manchester than in all Connacht. The comparison between town and country may seem unfair ; but dirt is dirt wherever you find it, and there has been too much uncontradicted nonsense talked about the dirtiness of Ireland.

If I seem to exaggerate on this matter, it is because I wish to redress a balance and bring the truth nearer. Politicians, I believe, have for a long time had the loudest say about Ireland, and they have almost invariably maligned her either out of love or from malice. Pro-Irish politicians, wishing to make a pitiable and sympathy-winning show of the country, have dragged forward the dirtiest and most dismantled mud hovels as demonstrations of the wretched condition of the people. Anti-Irish politicians, on the other hand, have called up these same dirty and dismantled hovels as witnesses to the fact that the Irish are a half-savage and worthless people, less fit than any other in Europe to be trusted with the government of their own land. Thus a very deceptive myth has been created—a myth which many of us even in Ireland have begun to believe. All sides have agreed to judge Ireland by its worst, and have held up as the typical Irish home not anything like the average Irish home, but the most tumbledown and ill-kept Irish home they could find.

Irish farm-houses vary, of course, from imposing stone-finished dwellings, fitted out with pianos



BRINGING HOME TURF IN DONEGAL.

and Victorian furniture, down to small two-roomed and even one-roomed cottages, white-washed, and with thatched roofs held down by numerous stones hanging from cords over the eaves. I for one like the smaller houses better than the larger. There is no room here for any decorations, save the decorations that are in themselves necessary things.

The turf fire burns on the floor against the wall furthest from the door, and over it from hooks and hangers swings a coal-black pot with swollen sides and insect-like feet, or a heavy old-fashioned kettle. High upon another wall rises the dresser with its rows of pleasant and many-coloured delf—the most comfortable of all ornaments. Perhaps, there is a wooden bed in the corner of the room—a large and lordly bed, high beyond all temptation to sit down on the edge of it. There is a wooden chair here and there, and, perhaps, a long bench against the wall in which the door is built.¹ If there is a second room, the instinct for ornamentation will as likely as not have been at work. Sometimes, in a room like this, you see crudely-coloured pictures of saints plastered all over the wall—pictures sold by pedlars or given away with religious papers. Or there may be political cartoons or portraits of heroes—equally horrible in colour.

Perhaps the two most popular pictures in Irish houses are the Holy Family and Robert Emmet.

¹ People who talk of the bad ventilation of Irish country houses often forget the half-door over which a constant stream of air pours in.

After these come Daniel O'Connell and the things that grocers give away at Christmas, and occasionally portraits of royal people like Queen Victoria or King Edward VII. These royal pictures are sometimes to be seen in the same room with portraits of Wolfe Tone and Emmet, and are to be taken as proofs that the people want cheap decorations, not that they are becoming loyal to the English connection. In Unionist homes, of course, they have another meaning. Here they add to the dullness of walls already made dull by framed photographs — dismal photographs dismally framed—of those who have emigrated and those who have died. In the Orange homes of Ulster, too, the portrait of King William the Third, blue-coated and on a white horse, takes the place of the portrait of Emmet, and the Rev. Henry Cooke, the genius of bigotry and debate, is the Presbyterian substitute for Daniel O'Connell. In the poorer houses the black mantelpiece has often as its proudest ornament a coloured delf statue of King William of Orange seated on a charger.

Many of the houses in all parts of the country make an attempt at civilisation and liveliness with pictures taken from the English magazines —pictures of pretty, fluffy women, pictures of deanimalised animals, pictures of the splendours of war. The country houses are not so bad in this respect as the houses in town. The ugliness of the country house, in other words, is more Irish and therefore less deadly than the ugliness of the

town house. But they are both tolerably—or intolerably—ugly.

It is my strenuous opinion that there is nothing in the world more essentially a national matter than taste—taste in dress, in food, in manners, in household arrangement—and that a people without nationality must always be a people without taste. Ireland is a country whose nationality has become as weak as watered gruel, and, until this is made strong and real again, as I believe it will be with the help of the Gaelic spirit, I see no prospect that Irish farm-houses will become beautiful and coloured-haunted places, inhabited by distinctively-dressed women and well-mannered men. Even now, if one wants to see that part of Ireland in which dress is least dull and manners most gentle, one must go to the most impoverished and most Irish districts, like Achill in the west.

Taste, however, in the sense of that fine spirit which touches nothing that it does not adorn, is a rare thing anywhere in Ireland. That it is growing with the other new national forces is shown by the fact that every day it is becoming a less surprising thing to see a few flowers in bloom outside a farmer's house or a labourer's cottage. The Orangeman of Ulster, I may say, had always these flowers outside his window. The Orange lily, flaming and erect upon its stalk, is by good fortune the emblem of all to which he clings most passionately, and this has probably encouraged him in the taste for growing flowers. If

Nationalism had been symbolised by a rose instead of the shamrock, it might have made all the difference in the world in the appearance of Irish country places.

There is no feature in the economy of the Irish home which has been more commented upon than the manure-heap which so often lies in shapeless squalor not far from the door. This has been pointed to as a breeder of disease—a direct ancestor of consumption and the direst fevers. I met a brilliant doctor some time ago who quarrels with the evil fame of the manure-heap. He admits its ugliness of look, and, at times, of smell, but he holds that its influence on the health of the people has been greatly exaggerated. If Irish farm-children were brought up on good food—if they had something more invigorating to eat and drink than tea and white bread and potatoes and American bacon—they would not have much difficulty in resisting all the germs that a manure-heap could nourish. I am inclined to think, too, that if the Irish were not the worst cooks in Europe, the country would be a good deal healthier. Perhaps, however, this applies to farmers of the middle sort, and to the people in towns rather than to the poorest of the peasantry. For the Irish certainly make tea admirably and bake admirably, and boil and fry bacon sufficiently well, and these are practically all the foods with which the poor have much acquaintance.

The farmer who is above the line of poverty,

however, occasionally gets his wife to experiment with beef, and the result is often a woe to the stranger. Never in any place have I seen such leathery and impracticable gobbets of meat as I have sat down to again and again in the houses of small Irish farmers. Perhaps the meat is taken from some part of the animal that the townsman is accustomed to scorn, or it may be that it is too fresh. I do not know. I cannot believe, however, that any meat would be so militantly bad, so defiant to the human tooth, if it were treated with proper gentleness in the cooking. Let me admit, on the other hand, that there are many exceptional houses which good cooking makes pleasant in the memory, and that, even in those places where the meat is most impossible, they can nearly always cook a chicken excellently. It is all a matter of training. There is a low standard of taste in the country, and bad cooking is but one feature in the general disorder.

While on the subject of food, I may mention one curious thing about the tastes of the country-people. They look with a kind of modest shame on their home-baked bread as compared with the white loaves of the town. More than once, when I have chanced to have a meal in a small farmhouse, have I had to listen to royal apologies because there was no loaf, but only home-baked bread, to set on the table. Equally odd must it seem to many that, not even in the poorest Irish home, will the people dream of eating so passable

a vegetable as turnip-tops. I remember when I came to England first and had turnip-tops offered to me in a restaurant, I felt a sort of disgust, as though I had been asked to eat some indecent thing.

There is a change coming over Ireland in regard to food and cooking as in most other matters. Cookery is now being taught as an art in the technical schools and elsewhere, and if the tables of some of the farm-houses are not sensibly the more agreeable, it is because the conservatism of the people holds out against new-fangled things, even when they are sweet to the taste. I heard of one instance in which there was a more absurd cause for the new talent's being left to rust without use. A farmer's daughter in the south, having returned home with her training in cookery, was permitted amid some excitement to prove her gifts in getting ready the midday dinner. She prepared a magnificent steak pudding, the like of which had never been seen in the house before, and her father glowed with enthusiasm at the end of the meal. "We must always let Mary do the cooking after this!" he cried, and the happiness on the children's faces echoed him. All the greater was their surprise when the woman of the house, hearing this, suddenly lifted up her voice and wept. "Oh!" she lamented, wringing her hands. "After me cooking and slaving for you for twenty years! And now to have my own daughter put against me!" And she finished with a flood of tears. Stunned by

the new twist things had taken, the family made haste to comfort her. They weren't thinking what they were saying, they explained; they were only meaning to tell Mary how they liked her cooking.

Slowly the mother dried her eyes and cheered up, and no one ever dared to propose Mary as family cook again. Thus, in at least one house, the old cookery won its decisive battle against the new, and a family that might be taking in health with its food still sits down at meal-times to hard and knobby matter swimming in watery gravy. Let me warn rash generalisers, however, that this is not to be taken as a picture of an average Irish home.

I am afraid I have wandered some way from the point which led me to speak of food in connection with farms. I mentioned it chiefly in order to bring in an opinion that bad food—and badly-cooked food—is the cause of more weakness and disease in Ireland than all the obtrusive manure-heaps you will see between the house-doors and the roads. I think the clothes of the people are also somewhat to blame. Country people very rarely change their clothes when they get a wetting: often they have no other clothes into which to change. Children and grown-up people go about in the rain as though the sun were shining, and in a wet country like Ireland the result of this is bound to be disastrous. Add to this the fact that in too many places the houses are built on regularly-flooded lands, and on the

marshy edges of streams, and you have another fruitful cause of bodily ills.

Poverty and the want of an enlivening national spirit, however, are the real cause of the weakness of Ireland. If disease results, for instance, from the presence of an animal in the house during the winter months, this must be put down in some measure to the generosity of very poor people. One has heard so much of the pig as an inmate of the Irish home that one is almost inclined to put it down as a myth, so comparatively rare a sight is it in the thirty-two counties. Thousands of Irish people believe that the household pig is only an English music-hall joke, for they have never seen such a thing. It is only in poor and unsheltered places, indeed, it is ever to be found, and then, chiefly, in the cold stormy times of winter. If in those shrill nights and days the pig is admitted to the comfort of the hearth, it by no means follows that the house is turned into a pig-sty. The pig is not necessarily a filthier animal than the dog, but can be equally accustomed to habits of cleanliness. I knew a most refined and wealthy lady who kept a pig as a pet. At the same time I am not going to argue that the very poor people in Ireland can fight against the dirt of circumstances any more than the very poor people in any other country. Poverty, when she settles down in a country, always ends by bringing in her little sister, dirt, to live with her. Crowded houses are bad enough when the crowd

is entirely composed of human beings. They are, in the imagination of sensitive people, intolerable, when added to the human beings are animals—especially farm animals like pigs and cows—which must at all costs be kept from perishing in the cold.

I must say, however, if I had a miserable hovel and a pig, and had not the means of putting up a second miserable hovel in which the pig could enjoy that minimum of warmth and shelter to which even pigs have a natural claim, I would count myself more charitable to give the animal a corner of my hut than to send it out to a death of cold. There is the obvious retort, “But why keep a pig?” Equally to the point would it be to ask, “Why live?” The pig and the potato-patch are among the first of the assets of life on the small farms of Ireland.

It is impossible, I imagine, for any one who has not travelled in Ireland to realise the bad conditions in which the poorest of the peasantry live. I might almost say, in which all the country people live, for Irish farming life is unsatisfactory from top to bottom. Especially so is the way in which the people have been driven out of possession of the good lands. Ireland is a country in which, to put the truth in an extreme way, all the land not worth cultivating is cultivated, and all the land worth cultivating is left out of cultivation. It is a country in which the farmer with ten talents hides them in a napkin, and the peasant with only one talent—or a chipped piece

of one—puts it to the most marvellous usury. There is no parallel in Europe to the state of ill-cultivation which results from this condition of things. Indeed, as one interpreter of statistics has put it, “such a fact as that 63.1 per cent. (nearly two-thirds!) of the whole country should be given up to hay and pasture is unparalleled in the world.” For the rest nearly a quarter of the surface of the country is barren and unfit even for pasture, while a miserable one-and-a-half per cent. is given up to “woods and forests.” The remainder—about 12 per cent.—is the difficult kingdom of the plough and the spade.

It is an old story that nearly all the best land in Ireland is in possession of bullocks. The fatness of Meath and the rich glories of the Golden Vale that runs across Munster are too good for human beings. So human beings withdraw,¹ with some grumblings, but still for the most part courteously, to America, in order that cattle may come in and possess the land with their idle strength and the will of God be accomplished. Sometimes the purseless people, gathering from some vague part of their souls the conviction that so wasteful a system of land-using proceeds from the will, not of God, but of the Devil, take it into their heads to protest effectively against sin, and a cattle-drive

¹ This is less true of the Golden Vale than of Meath. In parts of the Golden Vale the people have shown themselves magnificently tenacious, and no district in Ireland has been more progressive in the matter of building labourers' cottages.

ensues. A cattle-drive, it may be noted in this connection, means simply what it says—a driving of cattle. It does not mean cattle-maiming or any other kind of brutality. There is more cruelty to animals, I imagine, practised in a single week by the Irish railway-companies, with their inhuman methods of transporting animals, than all the cattle-drivers of the country would be guilty of through an entire year. Occasionally, I know, some ill-balanced person, made brutal by brutal circumstances, creeps out in the night to wreak a hysterical revenge on the dumb beast of a man, who, he thinks, has wronged him. Things like this, are done by isolated, ill-witted individuals; they are not the characteristic Irish deeds of Irishmen. They are things that happen, as Mr R. E. Prothero, a Conservative Englishman, shows in his “Pleasant Land of France,” even among the most humane people. They broke out like a disease among the gentlest people in France—the people of Picardy—in land-war times, just as they broke out during the eighties of last century in Ireland. There are always some men whom excitement and poverty make mad.

To return to the Irish—or anti-Irish—system of land-using which gives a preference to bullocks over men and women and joyous children, it must be admitted at once that the cattle-drivers, vaguely conscious though they are of the economic wrong of the present system, would not necessarily themselves turn that economic wrong into an economic

right, if they came into possession of the rich lands. Not immediately, at any rate. The National Schools did not educate them to be efficient Irishmen—farmers or anything else. Probably, until Sir Horace Plunkett's organisation and other agencies have spread agricultural common-sense in the country, the cattle-drivers would be quite as uneconomic farmers as the red-faced grazier who rolls about the country on his car with his armed policemen following him on their bicycles. The truth is, the Irish farmer is very often ignorant of the first principles of agriculture. His teachers, whether in or out of school, never made any attempt to give him light on the matter. In many parts of the country he will only till his land when it is too poor to be of any use for grazing purposes. When I was in a town in the southern midlands lately, I noticed that a great deal of the land to the north of the town was tilled while to the south nearly all the fields were grass-green. "You see," explained a friend who was with me; "the land on the north side is poor soil, and they have to till it."

It is the poor people on the poor land, who cultivate the ground with the most passionate earnestness. Consequently, it is in the poorest counties, not in the richest, that you will often find the greatest press of life, the highest social energy, the liveliest minds. I had rather live in the most congested district in Donegal than on the most fertile estate in Meath, and Achill Island

interests me more than the Golden Vale. In Meath you may walk a long way and meet no human being and see only an occasional isolated human habitation amid the wastes of lavish fields. The loneliness of this bullock-land came home to me most overwhelmingly when I was told recently how a visitor, tramping the country one Friday, fell in with a herdsman and began to talk of some one who had lately died. The stranger asked the herdsman when the funeral was to be, but the herdsman replied how would he know, as he had seen no one to speak to since he had been to Mass on Sunday. One hears a good deal of the loneliness of Canadian prairies, but the loneliness of some Irish pasture-lands is more tragically terrible, for it is a loneliness ghost-haunted by one's vision of the men who once dwelt there with their families and there flow of talk and their little cares.

Compare with this rich, idle, solitary country the small brown fragments of farms that crowd into each other's sides among the shelterless hills of Achill. Here, amid the gloom and the dark wind, rises a land populous in parts with cottages as a city with human beings. It is a place of tiny dwellings and tiny farms. Out in the fields you see the women labouring and bringing wonder into the rocky darkness of the island with their heavy petticoats of red and blue that you will not surpass for colour in a Titian. The men dig the earth into strange shapes—furrows and ridges that you would conceive might be dug

blindly by night. The social spirit is here, however, making continual war on the hungry bareness of things. The people delight in dancing and song, and old men scrape a living from twittering fiddles on the earthen cottage floors in the evenings. Irish, of course, is the language of the place, and Irish are the ways. This is the more curious, because no part of Ireland sends the same continuous swarm of people to England and Scotland as does Achill. Every summer, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say, the population of Achill flings itself into British fields to help with the potatoes and turnips and harvests, and it seems as though few but old men and the mothers of children are left to gather in such harvest as there is at home. Excursion trains carry the young and the strong and the adventurous from this westernmost part of Ireland to Glasgow or Liverpool for a fare of twelve shillings—I believe there is even a boat which takes a labourer from Westport to Glasgow for six shillings; and in those few weeks of stooping labour among the potato and corn fields of England and Scotland must be amassed sufficient wealth to keep the farms at home out of bankruptcy during the rest of the year.

Sometimes you will hear foolish people, who may have seen an Irishman making a noise outside a public-house in Liverpool, talking as though the harvesters were a pack of uproarious, drunken, good-for-nothings who go back to Ireland as poor as they left it. The people at home know better.

The shop-keepers know better, for they allow debts to run all winter, knowing that they will be paid—with a little interest heaped-up—after the home-coming from the British harvests. There are said to be some 200,000 “uneconomic holdings” in Ireland. Achill must contribute her share to this figure. It seems a ludicrous thing that people should run farms which do not pay any more than they should run shops which do not pay. There is a certain royalty of extravagance about it. Yet many Irish farmers could never make ends meet,¹ were it not for the steady gifts of sons and daughters

¹ The following budgets of typical families in the congested districts were collected and published by Mr W. Micks in the first Report of the Board (1892). They give a vivid idea of the poverty of some of the Irish farms.

No. I

RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE OF A FAMILY *in ordinary circumstances*,
THE RECEIPTS BEING DERIVED FROM AGRICULTURE, FISHING
AND HOME INDUSTRIES.

<i>Receipts.</i>		<i>Expenditure.</i>	
Sale of heifer or bullock . . .	£4 10 0	Rent . . .	£2 0 0
Sale of five sheep . . .	3 15 0	County cess . . .	0 5 8
„ pig . . .	3 10 0	Tea . . .	5 17 0
„ eggs . . .	2 4 4	Sugar . . .	1 19 0
„ flannel ortweed . . .	3 10 0	Meal . . .	7 14 0
„ corn . . .	0 15 0	Flour . . .	1 17 6
„ fish . . .	8 0 0	Clothing . . .	6 8 6
„ knitting, etc. . .	1 0 0	Tobacco . . .	2 7 8
		One young pig . . .	0 15 0
		Implements . . .	1 4 9
	£27 4 4		£30 9 1

Home produce consumed by the family is valued at from £5, 10s. to £10.

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who have gone to America. Thousands of others, like the Achill people, regularly cross over to Great Britain and raid it for the gold and silver of subsistence.

No. II

RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE OF A FAMILY *in very poor circumstances*
THE RECEIPTS BEING DERIVED FROM AGRICULTURE AND FISHING.

<i>Receipts.</i>			<i>Expenditure.</i>		
Sale of calf . . .	£2	0 0	Rent	£1	10 0
„ two sheep . . .	0	16 0	County cess . . .	0	2 0
„ pig (profit) . . .	2	0 0	Clerical charges, etc. . .	0	6 0
„ fish	3	0 0	Meal	2	0 0
„ eggs	2	0 0	Flour	1	10 0
			Groceries, etc. . . .	0	10 0
			Clothing	3	0 0
			Lights	0	5 0
			Utensils, tools, etc. . .	0	10 0
			Tobacco	1	6 0
	£9	16 0		£10	19 0

Home produce consumed by the family is valued at from £12 to £17.

No. III

RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE OF A FAMILY *in the poorest possible*
CIRCUMSTANCES, THE RECEIPTS BEING DERIVED FROM AGRICULTURE AND LABOUR IN THE LOCALITY.

<i>Receipts.</i>			<i>Expenditure.</i>		
Eggs	£1	3 0	Rent	£1	0 0
Sixty days labour at			County cess . . .	0	2 0
1s. per day . . .	3	0 0	Meal	5	17 0
Herding cattle . .	4	0 0	Clothing	0	10 0
			Groceries	4	0 0
	£8	3 0		£11	9 0

Home produce consumed by the family is valued at about £6.

These budgets, by the way, do not include families in which there are migratory labourers who bring a few more pounds back from Scotland and England.



ACHILL BOY.

Three years ago, the Irish Department of Agriculture issued a Report, showing the number of Irish men and women who went out on this yearly adventure to England and Scotland. It was estimated that the number of Achill workers who temporarily left Ireland in 1905 on this errand was between 1500 and 1600, the entire population of Achill being, I believe, between 6000 and 7000. The term "Achill workers," however, covers others besides the people of Achill, and is used technically to describe the labourers from Achill and neighbouring places who go to Scotland—and especially to Ayrshire—to help in the work of potato-lifting.

These labourers are engaged in squads for the season, and it is calculated that in a season of four-and-a-half months one of them may with luck save about eight pounds. The Achill labourers are said to be distinguished from the other Irish migratory workers in several respects. Women take part in the adventure as well as the men; they are, if anything, more numerous than the men. Further, "there is more of the family group relationship among the workers," and other workers are not in the same way engaged in squads and for the season. At the same time, I imagine that a good many people leave Achill for Great Britain every year who are not classified as "Achill workers." The Connacht men who go to England must include a share of them, for I have talked with men in Achill familiarly about England and one of them even sang me a song about "Sweet Liverpool."

The Connacht man with the keenest eye to prosperity is said to go to Lancashire for the haying, then to Lincolnshire or Cambridgeshire for the corn harvest, and after that to Warwickshire or Staffordshire for the potato-lifting. If he has a saving disposition, and is fortunate enough to have no fortnight's spell of unemployment, he may be able to take £20 home with him as the result of five months' work. The number of labourers who left Ireland in 1905 to help in the work of British farms was 14,830. Mr W. G. S. Adams, the statistician who prepared the Report for the Department of Agriculture, estimates the savings brought back (or sent back) by all these people to Ireland in a year at about £275,000. A heroic-looking sum, which does infinite credit to the Irish peasant but reflects somewhat on a system which leaves the fields of Ireland deserted and unprofitable.

The lives of the majority of these labourers and of many of the small farmers of the west of Ireland, I think, are the strongest disproof that could be desired of the common theory that the Irish are by nature a lazy people. "The western peasantry," declared Sir Horace Plunkett, in a recent article in "The Nineteenth Century," "when working for wages in England and Scotland, or engaged in a struggle for bare life in almost impossible physical surroundings, develop surprising industry and resourcefulness." Another close observer, the editor of "The Irish Nation," wrote

the other day in a similar mood : “ The Connemara man’s capacity for spade-work on his own soil, to which he is so intensely devoted, is almost miraculous.” I remember some years ago a friend of mine, a Unionist and a doubter of Ireland, went to Donegal on some agricultural business for a Dublin Castle department, and came back with the same story. “ I used to believe that all the Irish were lazy,” he wrote to me, “ but since I came to Donegal I have seen men forcing a livelihood out of patches of rocks and stones, where any other people I ever met ”—and my friend had enthusiastic experience of farm-work both in England and Scotland—“ would have thrown themselves over the cliffs in despair.” The truth is, there is plenty of energy in Ireland. It is, however, as often as not, energy wasted through ignorance or through want of capital or because the Irish farmer is most demoniacally energetic where being energetic is least worth while. The tragedy of Ireland, indeed, is not so much the tragedy of want of character—though it is partly that—as the tragedy of waste of character. Ireland is a country, not only of wasted fields, but of wasted men and women. And of all the conditions that waste the men and women of the nation there is none more wasteful than this system of settling them on small, hard-hearted farms.

Sir Horace Plunkett, whom I have quoted already—he is one of the few writers worth quot-

ing about Ireland—has again and again drawn attention to this wasteful sort of land-distribution. It is especially wasteful because, not only are the holdings in the poor districts absurdly small, but frequently they lie about in scattered parts like the torn limbs of Pentheus. “Often,” as Sir Horace puts it, “a holding of three or four acres will be divided into as many as a dozen or twenty patches, lying intermingled with patches held by other tenants.” It is like a child’s puzzle of Find the Farm. More inconvenient and more primitive still is it when the fragmentary estates are shaken up regularly in the basket and redistributed according to the system known as “rundale.” I remember when I was driving along the coast road on the north of Donegal, one day, I noticed the fields running up from the side of the road in little lean strips, looking much as I had always pictured the lands of village communities in my imagination, except for their ill-fed appearance. I asked a neighbour the meaning of these strange shapes. “Well,” he said, “they divide it like that so as to make sure everybody has a good bit.” One cannot help having a grave doubt as to their success in this laudable aim.

I will say nothing more about the Irish farmer here, but I suspect he will appear in a good many of the succeeding chapters. I hope I have been fair to him. I only wish the generations had treated him less scurvily. Ireland of the coming times must be built largely in farm-houses and in

labourers' cottages, and therefore the farmer and the farm-labourer are to me potential heroes. The building of Ireland, however, will be at the hands of a new race of men, more cultured, more independent, more tolerant and at the same time more intolerant, than the present. Ireland has escaped the dehumanising shock of the Industrial Revolution. She will, I believe, discover an industrial life that is nearer the life of the farms than is the industrial life of most western countries at present. She will fill her countrysides, I trust, with energy and music and exuberant living, and in doing this will beat out a new civilisation upon the anvil of the world.

I had better, perhaps, say before closing this chapter, that there are many country places in Ireland where the lands are rich and yet not given up to death by grazing, but are cultivated as well as the means of the occupier will permit on a common-sense system of rotation of crops (though it is surprising to see how the principle of the rotation of crops is ignored in some districts which have a fairly comfortable look.) These farms have well-kept hedges and iron gates that swing clear on hinges of prosperity. The farmers' carts lumber along the roads with brightly-painted red and blue cribs. The harness on the horse is not make-shift but stout and well-kept. The potato-plants are sprayed carefully to a blue tint with the copper sulphate mixture to keep away the blight. Even on the careless farms,

however, potato spraying is common, for very few farmers entertain the early religious objection of one stout conservative that to put chemicals on the potatoes was an interference with the will of God. The farm-house of the prosperous sort has little plantations of trees around it, and an orchard and flower-beds, and often a lawn for games. The houses are stone-finished and four-square and roofed with slate—not so beautiful as the old rain-marked thatched houses, perhaps, but much more prosperous and settled-looking. Even in these places of success, however, the atmosphere of sleepy fatness which you will sometimes see in the south of England is uncommon. The difference between Ireland and the south of England, I should say, is the difference between a dreaming country and a sleepy country. Not that either Ireland or the south of England can be comprehensively defined in these phrases, but there is an element of truth in the contrast.

I may note another thing. Irish countrysides are so different from each other that it is not easy to find an interpreting word which will cover them all. Still, there is one thing which gives a unity—a personality, as it were—to Ireland. It is the glory of light which comes towards evening and rests on every field and on every hill and in the street of every town like a strange tide. Everywhere in Ireland, north, south, east, and west, the evening air is, as a fine living poet has perceived, a shimmer as of diamonds. It gives a



COUNTY ANTRIM GIRLS.

new wonderfulness to the untidy farms, to the horses out in the fields as they munch the darkening grass with a noise, to the carelessly clad farmer hanging over a gate with invisible lapwings crying above his head, to the stained white little house with its oil-lamp not yet lit, and the glow of the turf-fire growing momentarily stronger. I believe and hope that this light is the symbol of some good thing which will one day find its way into the breast and limbs of the Irish countryman and make him, not only an imaginative and therefore progressive farmer, but a man of high dreams and a high heart who will establish in Ireland a kingdom of the spirit, beautiful and adventurous.

CHAPTER III

MARRIAGES AND MATCH-MAKING

IT is unlucky to marry for love, according to an Irish proverb.¹ Ireland, if one can trust the general belief, is a land of marriages of convenience rather than of marriages of romance, and undoubtedly it is also a land of happy marriages. Consequently, the proverb seems to have a kind of negative justification. I think myself that there has been a good deal of exaggeration as to the extent to which the match-making custom prevails in Ireland. Certainly, there has been some exaggeration regarding the evil effects of the custom. Still, to any one who respects the economic or social independence of woman, it is an uncomfortable thing that a custom of this sort should be so general as it is, even if it is not a frequent begetter of tragic consequences. The mind of young Ireland is at the present moment in the beginnings of revolt against it. In ancient Ireland, it is interesting to note, it was the man who always brought the marriage portion—not the woman, as it is at present. As this was a

¹ A contradictory proverb on the same subject runs: "Marry for love, and *induster* for riches."

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survival from times when men bought their wives, the modern method must be considered on the whole as an advance on it. At the same time, the older system had many points of superiority. Under it a certain amount of the marriage portion became the woman's to do with as she liked. Married women's property was secured to them in Ireland many centuries before the Married Women's Property Act conferred equal rights upon women in England. The present system in Ireland works out less advantageously for women. Now, it is the husband who appropriates the marriage-portion, or most of it. Sometimes, he even uses the portion which his wife brings him to marry off his sisters. And so the same fortune may play a part in the making of many marriages, and pass from man to man, almost intact.

Match-making, of course, is known in every country where money is revered, and it is not only in Ireland that men marry with an eye to a dowry. Still, Irish match-making is a distinct institution. It is not an unheard-of, though it is an uncommon, thing in rural Ireland for the woman never to have seen the man she is going to marry until he calls at her father's house to take away the dowry. Cases even have been known where the girl had not set eyes on her husband till the marriage-morning. The marriage is frequently arranged without any reference to her tastes and wishes. Her father comes home one evening and tells her that he has got a hus-

band for her, and she can but wait in patience and wonder till the young man calls.

Marriages like these are brought about by a curious machinery. It is often difficult to know who first suggests them. Sometimes, it is an old busy-body with an appetite for glory. He casts his glance at a young girl and learns by some means or other the amount of the fortune which her father is willing to give with her. After this, he puzzles his brains to find a suitable husband. He picks out some farmer of substance and broaches the matter to him in hints, say, during a drink at a fair.¹ If the farmer seems inclined for the marriage, the match-maker goes off and arranges a conference between him and the girl's father. It is then the bargaining begins, the girl's father doing his utmost to lessen his prospective son-in-law's demands by it may be fifty sovereigns or it may be a cow. Indecent scenes of heat and miserly excitement in connection with

¹ Mr Stephen Gwynn, in "A Holiday in Connemara," gives a description of a match-making party, in which eight or ten of the boy's friends called at the girl's house and met an equal number of her people. "The host sat at the head of the centre table; on his right was the suitor's spokesman, on his left the bride's spokesman." This curious parliament settled the terms of the marriage. "Lastly, the father dealt with the question of the ceremonial heifer, which is always given with a bride by any father who wishes to hold up his head in the country. He must buy one, he said, having no heifer beast that he would think good enough to send with his daughter." The girl's mother was unofficially present during the proceedings in a wall-cupboard behind curtains. The evening ended in a dance, the old men sitting over their liquor at a table in the corner till morning.

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these preliminary meetings are a favourite subject with Irish novelists, and indeed there is plenty of material both for satire and tragedy in the match-making business. Still, I think the novelists exaggerate the dark side. If the custom were altogether cruel and selfish in practice, Irish homes would not be so full of a pleasant atmosphere of affectionateness as they usually are.

As a matter of fact, the custom of match-making does not often seem to involve the forcing of husbands on unwilling girls, as we might at first think would be probable. Girls, I imagine, are not forced into marriage against their will in Ireland more frequently than in other countries. If the girl is not always at liberty to choose a husband, she is generally at liberty to refuse a husband she does not want. I know a girl who had to leave home in order to escape being married to an old man with money, who had been afraid to get married till his mother died, but the situation, I believe, is not particularly Irish. The very fact that the girls can and do leave their homes so freely is a proof that Irish women are not so slavishly dependent on their fathers as, in the dislike of match-making, one may be inclined to think. Very few of them find it necessary to leave their homes, even if they refuse to fall in with their father's choice of a husband for them. The ordinary affectionate father will be guided by his daughter's preference in arranging a match, and so it comes about that, even where

the custom of match-making prevails, the young people in kindly households choose their own husbands or wives as unconstrainedly as if they were in America.

Perhaps, it is the husband rather than the father who is the least commendable person in many country marriages. Money is often a rare and precious thing to a young farmer, and since it is the custom to give dowries, a marriage without a dowry would seem to him to be lacking in one of its most agreeable incidents just as a marriage without a wedding-dress would be regarded as tragically imperfect by a bride. High as may be his ideal of the purity of the home, his ideal of marriage is often only an ideal of convenience and comfort. Consequently, he does not feel that he is belittling either himself or the woman he marries in giving preference to girls in proportion to the fortunes they bring. Like all men, of course, he will take a good-looking woman with a smaller fortune than he will expect with a plain one; for the Irish, I think, are beyond most people lovers of personal beauty. Still, it is often said that a plain woman with a bit of money has a better chance of a good marriage than a handsome woman with none. Sometimes, when a very plain woman is mentioned, you will hear remarks such as: "It will need a good lump of money to get her a husband." But, the money being sufficient, the husband will ultimately turn up even for her.

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Many girls, knowing the demands of husbands, do not wait for their fathers to make matches for them. They go out to America or elsewhere and slave and scrape till they have a little treasure collected, and, a few years after their departure from home, they appear in their native parish again. It soon becomes known that they have a little money put by and are willing to settle down, should a suitable home be offered. Returned emigrants of this sort are not at all uncommon in parts of the west. Irish girls would rather marry Irish husbands than Americans any day, though, it is said, they are generally determined to take no husband who is not worthy of the fortune they have earned with so much labour and adventure. If a girl who has been to America finds after a month or two, or a year or two, of waiting at home that no suitable husband is to be had, she as likely as not packs up her trunk and again steams off for New York with an invincible heart. Her courage and determination will appear comical or tragical, according as you consider her an isolated and ambitious figure or a symbol of the eternal Odyssey of Ireland—the Odyssey that does not end in a return.

With regard to the girl who has come home from America, I may say that there are two opinions about her in rural Ireland. Progressive young farmers are rather attracted by her, because travel has sharpened her intelligence and taught her many desirable things about food and dress

and housekeeping. She is awake and ambitious and is a wife of whom one may be proud before one's neighbours. Other people take a less favourable view of her. They say that America has spoiled her, and taught her only airs and extravagance and that she is no longer fit to be the wife of a simple man. "Better one pound of Irish money than ten of American. That's what all the people about here will tell you," said a cross-looking old man who spoke to me on the subject one day. He meant, of course, that an Irish-American girl would run her husband into ten times as much expense as a home-staying girl.

He declared that American girls were only wasters of money, who would lead their husbands a terrible and ruinous dance. They had got used in America to all sorts of things and were not content to live in an ordinary way like other people.

The chief marriage trouble in Ireland, however, is not that so many people marry for money: it is that so many people do not marry at all, or not until very late. The labourer marries early, because he is as well off at twenty as he is likely to be at forty. The labourer, too, is free from the worries of match-making, though he has usually sufficient self-interest to choose for a wife a woman who will be able to add to the income of the house at times of turnip-thinning, hay-making, and the corn harvest. The most unhappily placed man in Ireland as regards marriage is the eldest son on a small farm. The

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other sons adventure forth to America, to England, anywhere out of Ireland, and marry when and whom they will. The eldest son remains on the farm to which he is heir and which cuts him off from all freedom of life until his father is in the grave. The farm does not produce sufficient wealth for two generations of married people, and the eldest son, being usually a dutiful person, waits on and on, obeying his parents, and filling the position of a farm-labourer, without the farm-labourer's hire or his freedom to marry and establish a new home in the world.

This tragedy of the eldest son is common in all parts and provinces of Ireland. It is as common in Protestant as in Catholic places. It is as common in valleys that look rich and prosperous as it is on hill-sides that are stony and barren. As a consequence of this, in Ireland the eldest son is often the last of the family to grow up. It does not seem an abuse of language that unmarried men should be called "boys" and unmarried women "girls," no matter how old they are, as is the custom through the country. (As an instance of this custom, I have heard a man describing how, when he was doing some work near a house, a girl ran out and interrupted him—"a middle-aged girl of about forty," he said.) The eldest son seems to me to be frequently a middle-aged boy. His parents treat him as a boy no matter what his age, and, as often as not, he remains one till they die.

I have heard that among the very poor people the old age pensions have made a difference in the position of the eldest son. His energies are no longer altogether occupied in making ends meet for his parents and himself. His parents with their pensions are almost self-supporting, so that he is free to go out and look for a wife if he wants one. According to report he has already in many cases done so.

Ireland is largely a country of late marriages and of few marriages. Emigration has drained the country to an unnatural degree of the young men and women of the marrying age, and those who remain are, as I have shown, frequently unable to marry until all the exuberance of life has gone out of them. Ireland stands third from the bottom in a list of thirty countries, whose marriage-rates have been compared by the Registrar-General of England. During a recent period of ten years, Ireland has shown an annual average of only ten people married for every 1000 of the population. Of the thirty countries compared, Servia has the highest rate—19.5 per 1000: England, along with Wales, is twelfth in the list with 15.8; France sixteenth with 15.1. This low Irish marriage-rate has, it is only right to say, been rising steadily during the past twenty years.

The average birth-rate in Ireland gives as serious cause for alarm—at least, for desire for change—as the marriage-rate. During the ten years, 1894-1903, it reached a lower average than any

of the thirty countries to which I have referred except France. The low French birth-rate, however, is due to the infertility of marriages; the low Irish rate to their fewness.

This last fact reminds us that things in Ireland are not so bad as a superficial glance at the statistics would suggest. It has been pointed out by Mr F. F. Montague in "*Leabhar na h-Éireann*" that, while the birth-rate per head of the population has declined rapidly during the last ten years in most countries, in Ireland during the same period it has remained stationary. The same writer quotes a paper read before the London Statistical Society in 1906 to show that, if we consider the birth-rate, not with reference to the whole population of the country, but with reference to the population of a child-bearing age, the position of Ireland is still happier. Ireland, it is proved, is inhabited by almost the most fertile race in Europe, and "Ireland and all its divisions alone among all the countries for which figures could be obtained show an increased fertility." Protestant Ireland and Catholic Ireland share this virtue of fertility as they share so many others.

Until the last paragraph or so, we have been discussing marriage for the most part with reference to the farming classes. Marriage, it may be said, is a subject of perpetual interest and speculation with them. If old country-women meet a pleasant girl on the road and get into talk with her, it is unlikely they will proceed on their journey without

having made a few humorous observations on husbands and marriage. Among other classes there are few marriage customs which differentiate Ireland from America or England. The gentry, of course, follow the English fashion, and the most notable thing about the town artisan is that, like the artisan elsewhere, he gets married by preference on a holiday like Easter Monday and goes off with his bride for a day's excursion.

Among the working classes in one Ulster town, according to an exaggerator, it is the way of the women to support their husbands. He affirms that it is the ambition of unmarried girls in the town to get sufficiently well-paid work to be able to keep a husband. A typical girl, he declares, will go to the clergyman and give him notice that she is going to marry, say, Jimmy Brown. The clergyman warns her that Jimmy is an irregular, thriftless character, who cannot be relied on to earn a steady living. "And what does that matter?" cries the girl. "Amn't I as well able to keep a man as Lizzie M'Keown that was married on Joe Harbison last week?" In Ulster, people—average people—are not married "to" but always "on" each other.

The young Protestant in the commercial and professional classes has also the reputation of being something of a materialist in his love-making. It is said that, when he hears of a girl who might suit him as a wife, he asks three questions: "What's her religion? How old is she? Has

she any money?" Sometimes, however, he falls in love before he knows what he is doing and marries a poor girl, or even a middle-aged one, or, more terrible still, a Catholic.

Mixed marriages—marriages between Catholics and Protestants—are, as I show elsewhere, as frequent as is wise, though usually, so far as I have seen, either the husband or the wife takes the "mixed" element out of the marriage by becoming converted to the religion of the other. The clergy of all the churches oppose these marriages tooth and nail. The Catholic clergy are often blamed for the intensity of their opposition, an opposition which, I imagine, has become more uncompromising since the present Pope was raised to the Papal Chair. Within the last few years, a Catholic, whose marriage with a Protestant girl an Irish Bishop refused to sanction, had to cross over to England to get a priest of his own church to marry him, and no doubt the same kind of thing had frequently happened. Protestants whom this annoys ought in fairness to consider the attitude of their own clergy in regard to the question of mixed marriages. Some years ago I remember hearing from a broad-minded Presbyterian minister how he himself had prevented a mixed marriage in the south of Ireland. A Presbyterian soldier in a Scottish regiment, which was quartered in a southern town, fell in love with a Catholic girl, and again and again besought her to marry him. The girl at last consented on

condition that the soldier would become a Catholic, and the soldier, probably not caring two pins for any religion, promised to do so. The Presbyterian minister heard of this and rushed off to the Colonel, urging the latter to save the man from so fatal a step. As a result, the Colonel immediately bundled the man out of the town and had him transferred to another regiment beyond the circle of temptation. The minister boasted of all this to me as though he had performed a noble work. Perhaps he had.

It may not be out of place here to remark that love-making is a good deal commoner in the towns than in the country, and in Protestant places than in Catholic places. The common joke among country boys in Ulster—"Are you doin' any coortin' this weather"?—springs from social conditions in which the sexes meet on easy and intimate terms. These conditions have their bad as well as their good side. Ulster pays for its greater sexual freedom by a frequency of illegitimate births unknown in the other provinces.

An illegitimate birth, of course, does not always imply immorality of a gross sort, and the people recognise this for all their Puritanism. I have known more than one admirable woman in country places whose child had no legal father and whose neighbours were sufficiently human in their philosophy to treat her as they would any married woman. Usually, the child is called frankly after its father, though not always. Its respectability

is even measured in part by the father's—or supposed father's—position in life. I once was startled to hear a very religious lady, who was praising a farm-labourer say: “And indeed it's no wonder he is a decent man, for they say his father was a Presbyterian minister.” No one need construe this as a thrust at the Presbyterian clergy, who are as clean-living a body of men as could be found in any country. Even among them, however, a rare exception will be found. As for the laity, there are a sufficient number of exceptions among them to make “Holy Willie's Prayer” a very intelligible poem in Ulster.

On the other hand, I think the Ulster atmosphere is sufficiently clean if you contrast it with that of the majority of civilised countries. But the sensualist disguised as a lover is unquestionably one of the persons of the play. The clergy and the parents make no attempt to teach sexual common-sense to the young. Among the middle classes in Belfast, hundreds of youths fling their arms round girls with an undesirable promiscuity, and, indeed, consider the girls rather dull—“chil-blains” is an expressive word I have heard them described by—if they object to the business. The curious thing is that practically all this amorousness which goes on within the middle classes themselves is quite moral from a conventional point of view. It is none the less demoralising on this account, for, where it exists, there can of course be no intelligent friendship between the sexes.

The young male amorists, too, frequently end by going forth on adventures among women outside their own class.

I think, nevertheless, there is a good deal of respect shown to women in Ireland. A youth does not take a girl into public-houses for drink in any part of Ireland as you will see youths doing in London and in Manchester. Neither will you see him embracing her on tram-cars, and in all sorts of public places, with the frequency which is so odd a feature of the social phantasmagoria in cities like London. In London these public embraces seem to pass without notice. In Belfast, in the daylight hours, hugging couples would, I am afraid, be figures of satire for small boys.

I am getting away from the subject of marriages and matchmaking, however. Before closing the chapter, let me return to the point, if only to mention one curious custom connected with marriages. It is considered the right thing in some parts of Ireland, if you are going along the road with a gun and meet a newly married couple driving on a car, to fire a shot into the air in their honour. I have seen a man suddenly catch up his gun, in a public-house, where he was having a drink, and rush out into the road to fire a shot skywards with every sign of enthusiasm when a bridal couple had driven by.

The excitements of wedding-days have lessened during the last century, for a hundred years ago—even, I have heard, a generation ago—there were

still traces of something that looked like the custom of marriage by capture in many country places. Something more than traces, indeed, if half the stories about eighteenth century abductions can be believed. I do not know whether the abduction habit had its origin in the Gaelic parts of Ireland, or among the invaders from England. Whichever may be the case, there is no doubt that young men in those days often sought girls who had fortunes by force where they now seek them by peaceable persuasion. In 1634 the Irish Parliament had to pass a measure for punishing those who "carried away maydens that be inheritors," and a century later abduction was made a capital offence. It was easy to break through the spirit of the law, however, for if the girl was placed in front of the man on the horse on which he carried her off, she, and not he, was technically responsible for the abduction.

The excitements of eighteenth century Ireland, it must be remembered, were the excitements of an abnormal country out of which many of the finest elements had been driven by persecution and war.

I am assured by a friend that traces of marriage by capture were still to be found in some parts of Cavan till fairly recent years, and that it was not an unknown thing for the bridegroom to ride up challengingly on horseback to the bride's house, and for the bride to climb out to him through the window. This was but a tradition and a ritual, the meaning of which had probably been long forgotten.

CHAPTER IV

STORIES AND SUPERSTITIONS (OR WHATEVER YOU LIKE TO CALL THEM)

It is a common opinion that the Irish are very superstitious, and, reading some books, you would imagine that a great number of Irish men and women passed their spare time in trances on the hill-sides, hearing the music and beholding the goings-forth of the fairy hosts. Ireland, however, is by no means a country of visionaries. I think that for every visionary you meet with, you will discover ten or even twenty people who occupy their idleness with gambling on the English horse-races. Still, there is no doubt that the old people—especially in the least Anglicised parts—have plenty of strange and incredible stories to tell, though the grown-up boys and girls smile across the fire at them with materialistic wisdom.

There are few parts of the country where you will not meet with some belief in witch-craft. Especially common is the belief in that form of witch-craft by means of which the butter is taken from your cows to enrich a wicked neighbour's churn. I have heard it said that old women are still to be found here and there in the fields

on May Eve, gathering herbs over which to murmur their butter-stealing spells. Usually, however, these moony ceremonies do not seem to be a necessary part of the bewitchment. "A very small drop of milk taken from the cow is enough to work the charm," is the account a girl from the midlands gives of the business. It seems to be with the idea of preventing the milk in its pure state from falling into doubtful hands that a farmer's wife in Meath, of whom I have heard, never sends a present of milk to a poor neighbour without first putting a pinch of salt in it. "It is not right," as the girl from whom I had the story said, "to let milk out into the wind without putting salt into it." The same girl told me a curious story of butter-stealing in her neighbourhood. There was a woman, she said, living not far from her father's, who was noticed getting a powerful lot of butter off her few cows. One day her mother determined to get to the heart of the mystery, and went to the woman's house. She said when she came home that she had found the woman standing on a creepie stool with her head down into the churn and her rosary in her hand. "It was praying she was," she declared, "but maybe to the devil." The girl's mother certainly was inclined to believe that something dishonest was afoot, for she herself had been brought up in a home where there was a charm nailed to the bottom of the big churn to protect the butter.

I have heard many similar stories of stolen butter in County Mayo. One of them told of an old woman, with one lean cow, who always managed to have two crocks full of butter to take with her to market—much more than she could ever have come by honestly. She was going to market one day, with her ass carrying the two crocks, when, just as they were crossing a bridge, something broke, and the crocks of butter fell out into the road and were smashed. Well, would you believe it, whatever was the matter with the butter, no dog or bird or beast would touch or taste it, but it lay there on the road rotting till the sun had melted it and the horses and cattle had trodden it away. It was something more than butter that was in it, my informant concluded.

If stories like these were only told as anecdotes to make a fireside interesting, they would have comparatively little value as revelations of the mind of a people; but they are nearly always related as a part of the history of the story-teller's neighbourhood and even of his family. Usually they deal with matters that have come within his own experience—real or imagined. When they go back as far as the days of his grandfathers and greatgrandfathers, they have a way of being more artistically shaped and more definite in detail. One does not often hear as full a story concerning contemporary or recent events as the story of the scholar and the three black bottles,

which I heard as an old true story during my last holiday. It related to the time when the poor scholars used to be going about the country—the poor scholars who, as every one knows, had knowledge more than common men. A learned man of them arrived one night in a farmhouse, where, churn as they might, they had been getting hardly any butter from the milk. “Put a pot on the fire,” he said to the farmer’s wife, when he heard the story, “and boil some milk in it, and I’ll find out who it is that’s stealing your butter.” He got a large black bottle from the farmer’s wife, and, when he had sealed and corked it, he put it into the pot where the milk was boiling, saying a number of words that you couldn’t understand while he did so. After a while, the bottle cracked, and with that there was a sound like a cry far away from the house. “Listen to that,” said the scholar. “I’ll put in another bottle and you will hear something more.”

He closed up a second black bottle, and put it into the pot, saying more words over it. When in due course this gave a crack, there was a shriek, as of a woman in great pain, much nearer the house than the first cry. “Do you hear that?” said the scholar, becoming interested in his work. “It isn’t long till she’ll be here now and she yelling in her pain. So bolt the door and don’t let her in till I tell you.” With that he took a third bottle, and saw that the cork was in it, and was just going to put it in the pot, when there

came a loud banging and shrieking at the door. "Let me in, let me in!" cried a voice from the outside, whining and supplicating. "Oh, you're killing me, you're killing me. If anything else cracks in me, I'll surely die." The man at the fire told them to wait, however, and to make her confess that she had stolen the butter, and promise never to do it again, while all the time the groaning and moaning went on as if she were in fearful torment. As he put the third bottle into the boiling milk, she let a shriek out of her and confessed, so he took the bottle out again, and told them to let her in. They let her in, and saw that it was an old woman from near the place. She confessed everything, and promised to give up the butter, so they let her off. After that, they were never troubled with scarcity of butter again.

Mr W. B. Yeats, whose "Celtic Twilight" should be read by all who are interested in Irish beliefs and visions, tells us in his collection of "Irish Fairy and Folk Tales," that, when the butter has been bewitched as in the story of the three black bottles, "sometimes the coulter of a plough will be heated red-hot, and the witch will rush in, crying out that she is burning. A new horse-shoe or donkey-shoe, heated and put under the churn, with three straws, if possible, stolen at midnight from over the witch's door, is quite infallible." I do not wish in the present book, however, to quote passages from books



A GAELIC STORY-TELLER.

(Bridget Costello, of the Claddagh, who won a prize at a recent Oíreachas for her story-telling.)

which everybody ought to have read for themselves, but rather to give a sense of what I have seen with my own eyes, and heard with my own ears, in Ireland or in the company of Irish people. Consequently, I will only mention here those beliefs which I know to be in existence, because I have met and spoken to the people who believed in them.

Very intimately connected with the belief in the stealing of butter by witchcraft is the belief in the evil eye or something like it. This belief may be expressed in the words of a Meath girl, who declared that "any one that has a grudging eye, to cast it on a live thing would make it decay away if it was not given to them." One of the traditional charms to protect cattle from being bewitched or "grudged" she described as follows. Get a bit of string, and put a certain number of knots on it, saying a prayer over each knot. The string should then be tied to the animal's tail in case any one had overlooked or grudged it. Another charm, "when a nice beast has been grudged," is to get a bit of the grudger's coat and burn it under the beast's nose.

It is not only from witches with the gift for stealing butter—there are some delightful stories, by the way, of witches who transform themselves into hares, and milk their neighbours' cows in this guise—and from people with malice in their eyes that the imaginative peasant apprehends danger. There is still plenty of belief in fairies in the country—

though it is not nearly so common, I think, as the belief in witchcraft—and in spite of the fact that fairies are known as “good people,” sensitive parents none the less object to having their children carried off by them. A Mayo man lately told me how, when he was a child, he was never sent out of the house on a message down the road without someone putting a coal or something of the sort in his pocket to protect him from unseen harm. There is no need, on the other hand, to suppose that it is necessarily a tragic fate for a child to be taken off by the fairies. A good many years ago, there was a lame boy in Mulranny on the coast of Mayo who used to be sent out to mind the cattle. One time he disappeared for two days, and, when he came home, he said that he had been with the fairies. As a proof that something supernatural had happened to him, he went out where there was only grass then, but where there are houses, and a hotel, and a railway station now, and he prophesied that a big house would be built here, and another house there, and something corresponding to a railway station in yet a third place. He pointed out the exact spots where all the new buildings in Mulranny stand to-day, and not only this but he traced the line of all the foundations. This, it must be remembered, was in days long before any one expected the great hotel to be built, and before there was any thought of railways in those parts. I heard the story as a true one from a man who himself was brought up in Mulranny.

I heard another story from him of a young woman who was stolen by the fairies in the same county—a story that, no doubt, has its parallels in other districts, for I seem to have heard something like it before. There was once a young farmer, he said, who lived in such-and-such a place, and who did not believe in the fairies, so that he would walk past a certain fairy rath on any night of the year without caring. One night he was going along the road, and had got past the rath when he saw a curious sight coming towards him. This was a coffin being carried by three tall, dark men, with no one in the place where the fourth man should have been. The young farmer thought this was queer. However, out of respect to the dead, he offered to help the bearers of the coffin, and went over and put his shoulder in the fourth place. The bearers walked forward in silence, but they had not gone far when one of the three said that it was time they had a rest. With that they laid the coffin down on the road. The young farmer may have looked away for a minute, or something of the sort. Anyway, he suddenly woke up to the fact that the three others had disappeared, and that he was alone with the coffin lying at his feet on the road.

After a while, when the others showed no signs of coming back, something impelled him to look inside the coffin, and there he saw a beautiful, fair-haired young woman, dressed not like a corpse at all, but in her ordinary clothes. She opened

her eyes while the young man was looking inside, and after a minute she sat up in the coffin, and he, being quite fearless, helped her to stand up and to come out on to the road. He asked her how she came to be there, but in answer to all his questions she only shook her head, so that he thought she must be dumb, and, not knowing what to do with her, took her along with him to his house. Well, she lived there for a good many years, looking after the house and keeping everything in beautiful order, but never opening her mouth to speak.

Among other things, she knitted him a long-sleeved vest or waistcoat, of which he was very proud. He was wearing this at a fair twenty or thirty miles away from his home one day, when he saw two men, an elderly man and a young one, looking at him very hard. First they looked at his waistcoat, and then they looked at him, and in the end they came up and asked him where he had got the vest. He asked them what they wanted to know for, and they told him that there was some kind of a stitch or pattern in it which they recognised, and that they only knew one person who could do that kind of work, and that they had lost her some years ago. The young man became interested in what he heard, and, thinking that this might be the father and brother of the girl in his house, he told them the story of the coffin and the three tall dark men, and asked them to go home with him and see the girl. They went, and,

sure enough, it was the old man's daughter. They were in great delight at first, but, when they found that none of them could get the girl to speak a word, they became as mournful as they had previously been happy. The girl then went off with the two strangers, and the young farmer promised to go and see her soon. Some nights after this, he was walking down past the fairy rath again when he heard voices near him. He stopped to listen and discovered that, whoever the speakers were, they were talking about the young girl, and grumbling about how they had been prevented from carrying her off on that first night. "Well," said one of them with satisfaction, "he has never been able to make her talk any way." "No," said another with a malicious chuckle, "and never will. It's not likely he'll ever notice that silver pin behind her ear, and pull it out so that she'll get back her speech."

On hearing this, the young man hurried off as fast as he could without being perceived, and on the next morning at break of day he rode off to the distant farm in which the girl's family lived. He found the girl sitting over the kitchen fire, and going up behind her, he saw the silver pin at the back of her ear just as he expected. He pulled this out, and no sooner had he done so than she got back her power of speech, and sat up and began talking to him. After that, her father and brother came in, and everybody was so happy that a match was immediately made of

it between the girl and the young farmer. It is to be presumed that they lived happily ever afterwards.

Of course, the fairy whose credit is most generally and firmly established in Ireland is not the fairy who steals children or beautiful young women, sometimes leaving a changeling in their place, but the Banshee—the fairy-woman whose cry is a portent of coming death. You will not have to go into the Irish-speaking districts, or even into the Catholic districts, to find people who believe in the Banshee. You will meet Protestants in County Antrim who believe that there is a Banshee in their family, and who say that they have heard its terrible cry. Occasionally, too, one meets among the Ulster Protestants with the belief in witches, but the last County Antrim girl who said to me that she knew a witch added significantly that the witch was a “Roman Catholic.”

To return to the Banshee, I have never myself met any one who had seen her in human shape, but that she has a human and alterable form many of the legends attest. “Sometimes,” declares Lady Wilde in “Ancient Legends of Ireland,” “the Banshee assumes the form of some sweet-singing virgin of the family who died young, and has been given the mission by the invisible powers to become the harbinger of coming doom to her mortal kindred. Or she may be seen at night as a shrouded woman, crouched beneath the trees, lamenting with veiled face; or flying past in the

moonlight, crying bitterly." Another portent of death, comparable to the Banshee, is the *Cóiste Bodhar*—the Death (or, rather, Deaf) Coach—which, according to some, is a kind of hearse drawn by headless horses. I know a man of fine intellect from Connemara who declares that he has seen the phantom. He says that he was driving out one day with some other people when they saw the silent shadow of a hearse drawn by four horses passing along the side of the road. There was no hearse in reality to cast this shadow.

Besides the Banshee and the Soundless Coach, there are numerous other evil portents in Ireland. Here as elsewhere it is bad luck to have a hare running across your path. Here as elsewhere you will find the rhyme about magpies :

One for sorrow,
Two for joy,
Three for a marriage,
Four for a boy,

or one of its variants. It is unlucky to kill robins, for they got their red breasts at the cross of Christ. It is unlucky to meet a priest or a red-haired person when one is setting out on a journey. "God forgive you, father, you've spoilt my day on me," said a holiday-making girl the other day to a priest she met on the road. "God forgive you, Bridget, for your foolish superstition," replied the priest. All the same, as her friend told me, the girl did not meet the boy she went out in the

hope of seeing that day. It is unlucky to meet funerals and not to turn with them, and I remember a medical student who was at college with me saying that funerals always brought him luck. Once, on one of the few occasions that I was ingenuous enough to put money on a horse, he and I had just been sending a postal order from the country town where we were staying to a Belfast book-maker when a funeral came up the road. My friend insisted—half laughing at his superstition—that we should go along with it, and we even accompanied it into the graveyard, where a Methodist minister delivered an address, holding up the conduct of the dead young man as an example for the bystanders to follow. I am curiously puzzled by myself when I look back on it, and wonder what the minister would have thought if he could have seen behind our serious eyes to the thoughts that were concerned, not with death and beauty of conduct, but with the fortunes of an English horse-race. The horse we backed did not win, I may add, and, having lost five shillings out of an already empty pocket, I no longer believed in the superstition about funerals.

The superstition that it is unlucky to let a red-haired person into the house the first thing in the New Year is, of course, not confined to Ireland. In many places, too, outside Ireland ill luck is supposed to be foretold by a crowing hen or a cock crowing at irregular times. On one occasion

a farmer's daughter told me how, when her uncle lay ill of blood-poisoning, "two hens came up to the door, where they do be strolling about, and one of them clapped her wings and crowed loudly." Said she to the serving boy, "What the deuce is the matter with the hen?" "I'm damned if I know," he replied. "With that," continued the girl who told the story, "I gave her a clatter with a stick and killed her—she was an awful old hen. Then the other, a young one, came up to the door and crowed and clapped her wings, and I threw the stick at her and lamed her. She had to be killed, and we made soup out of her. When my aunt came down the stairs she asked what had happened to the two hens, but I didn't like to frighten her by telling her what the hen had done. And my uncle died the third day after that."

There are, as might be expected, a good many families in Ireland in which the death of one of the members is often preceded by the disappearance of the rooks from the trees round the house, and ominous dreams are as common in Ireland as in most places. I knew one very beautiful and clever old Presbyterian lady who usually dreamt that she had lost one of her teeth a short time before the death of any of her near relations. She seemed to have other gifts of prophecy, too, for she told me how she had seen her husband's face in a dream three times before ever she set eyes on him in real life.

Besides the beliefs in omens, witches, fairies and ghosts—beliefs which exist in a hundred other forms than those I have mentioned—the country is full of strange stories about human beings who can change themselves into animals, and of animals who have lived for a time as human beings. I have already told how old women who bewitch butter are sometimes supposed to turn themselves into hares, this being a more convenient shape for the purpose of committing their thefts of the necessary drops of milk.

In County Mayo people will tell you that you must never say “Girrie”—this is a semi-phonetic spelling of the Irish word *girrphiadh*, “a hare”—to a M’Cann. This is because one of the M’Cann women of those parts was in a former age suspected of being a witch, and because a farmer whom she was injuring discovered her in her witchery. Seeing that his cows were ceasing to yield any butter in their milk, he began to spy on them in the field, and, one day, as he was looking through a space in the wall, he saw a hare busy taking the milk from them. He didn’t let a sign or sound out of him then, but the next time he came he brought the greyhounds with him. Well, the hare turned up again and began milking one of the cows, and, when she was in the middle of her work, he set the dogs at her. Off she ran, and the dogs after her, over wall and field, and wall and field, till she came near Girrie M’Cann’s cottage. The dogs were nearly touching her when she

reached it, and she made a wild leap for the window of the cottage as if it was her last chance of safety. Just as she was jumping, one of the dogs caught her scut in his mouth, though the window was too small for him to follow her. The farmer on coming up saw the dog standing there with the hare's scut in his mouth, and signs of blood on it where it had been bitten off. He went into the house to see if the hare was there, but he only found old Mrs M'Cann lying in the bed, groaning, and with marks of blood on the floor and the bed-clothes. She denied that any hare had come in through the window, and the farmer looked at her, and knew that she herself was the hare. After that, he told the neighbours what he had seen, and from that day she was always known as "Girrie" M'Cann. "And that's why," wound up the man who told me the story, "the M'Canns get angry if you say 'Girrie' to one of them."

The O'Tooles of Clare Island are said to become angry in a similar way if seals are mentioned in their presence. There is every reason why they should, if the story one hears about their ancestry is to be believed. In the beginning of the generations of the O'Tooles, we are told, a man of the family was wandering one day towards the edge of the island, which lies amid the coloured and wonderful tides of Clew Bay. In the water by the shore he espied three seals swimming about, and something gave him the idea that they were not ordinary seals. He had not been watching long,

when, sure enough, the three seals came suddenly up to the land, stepped out of their skins, and began dancing and running along the shore in the appearance of three beautiful young women. The man of the O'Tooles watched them for some time in amazement, but it did not take him long to recover his wits and decide upon a plan for capturing one of them. He crept down towards where the skins were lying, hiding himself from time to time behind a big stone so that he should not be seen. Having reached the shore, he caught up one of the skins, and made off with it as fast and as secretly as he could towards his home. He knew well that the seal-woman would follow where her skin had been taken, so he hid it cunningly in the thatch of his house, where no one would be likely to think of looking for it.

When the seals had had their fill of dancing and play on the shore, they went back to look for their skins, and their surprise was great to find that one of these was missing.

That night, O'Toole was sitting in his house, when, as he had expected, a beautiful woman in her bare pelt came to the door and asked him to give her back her coat. He did not let on that he knew anything about it, though she cried and moaned and besought him to give it back again. He held out so well, and had hidden the skin so cleverly, that in the end she had to settle down and stay on in his house, for she could not go away without her skin.

Well, she lived there a good number of years, and had four children, and O'Toole and she were very happy together, when one day during his absence a fire broke out in the house. It soon spread to the thatch, and there was a queer smell of singeing. The woman knew it was her seal's coat was burning, and climbed up to where it was, and, when she had found it, off with her to the water as fast as she was able. She forgot all about her husband and all about her children, and nothing would do her but she must get into the seal-skin again, and go out swimming into the sea where the other seals were. O'Toole never got her back again, but there was a hole in the seal's coat where it had been burnt by the fire, and when the seals came up swimming near the land you could tell this one by the burnt patch.

"You needn't believe the story," said the man who told it to me, "if you don't like ; but it's a queer thing the O'Tooles have always been known for their short arms. And if you called one of them a seal, there would be murder."

Ireland—at least, that part of it which lies within sound of the sea—is full of stories like this. "It would not do to injure a seal," said an old Kerry fisherman to a friend of mine ; "the seals are God's blessed creatures."

On the other hand, if it is wrong for a man to work injury among the creatures of the deep, it is equally wrong to have commerce with them of a more intimate kind. Old people of Kilkee will

tell you of a man who used to be there within living memory, and who took a mermaid as his wife. Nobody in the place would speak to him, or have anything to do with him.

The sea is full of strange mysteries, indeed, and the best course for men is to walk warily and separately among them. I was out in a lonely part of St John's Point in Donegal about two years ago, where a friend of mine was examining the dilapidated fragments of an old church. Near the ruin was a kind of harbour where some fishing boats lay, and a number of fishermen were pulling out a boat full of their brown nets over the heavy, purple water. There was a young man standing beside me, dressed in Sunday respectability, an extraordinarily handsome, strong man, with dark, shining hair, and eyes the colour of a dark pool among rocks. His bowler-hat and the watch-chain running across his waist-coat, with a medal hanging from it, gave him an air of town ordinariness for all his beauty. We got into conversation about the fishing in those parts, and he was telling me how the fish were being destroyed at a terrible rate by some curious kind of monster. I said that I supposed he meant porpoises.

"Well," he said, "perhaps *you* might call them porpoises, but they're no porpoises." I asked him what did he think they were then.

"I don't know whether there's any name for them," he said. "But I call them magic fish, for there's magic in them, and all the fishermen here

know it. One of them came into the bay there on the other side of the Point last year, and the fishermen had the idea that it was a porpoise, and the Government sent round a boat to destroy it. But when they had this one destroyed, it's a queer thing they could find no sign of its body, but two other ones came in its place to look for vengeance for it. There's no use trying to destroy them, because, for every one you destroy, there'll come two others in place of it. And the fishermen know that now." I do not remember whether he mentioned any other way, save the way of war, to get rid of these magic enemies.

In some parts of the country, where the imaginations of the people are not filled with the sea and its miracles, a beast which causes most exquisite terror is one which I always heard called in my childhood by the name of the "man-keeper."¹ It is a children's bogey. It is, I think, something about the size of a frog, and it haunts spring wells. I know that, when I was a child, I never got down on my knees beside a country well for a drink of water without looking carefully to see whether the eye of this small monster was anywhere watching me. If a man-keeper catches you drinking out of a well, he always makes straight for your mouth, and, no matter how tight you may close it, he will force his way in. I used to hear a story of a man near Maghera, in County Derry, who was chased by a man-keeper. He ran down the road with all

¹ The lizard, I suppose.

his might, and, feeling that he was being overtaken, he made a superhuman effort, and leaped over a six-foot hedge into a field. The man-keeper leaped the hedge, too, and with a series of vicious little jumps and wriggings got into his shut mouth, and, I suppose, into his stomach. Salt, they say, is the only thing with which the evil beast can be forced into the open world again, and it was with salt the Maghera man was treated when he reached home in torture.

I remember there were horrible tales about dangers from weasels and whittrets which affected my childish imagination almost as painfully as man-keepers. It was said that, if you injured a weasel, it would whistle on the other weasels in the neighbourhood, and that they would all come together in answer to the call, and give you the chase of your life.

There are a good many stories in Ireland which have nothing to do with either fairies or with animals, magical or otherwise, but are a part of the religious imagination of the people. Every holy well in the country—and they are sufficiently numerous—has its cycle of stories of marvellous cures, and the votive rags of those whom God has restored to sight, or to purity of blood, or to the power of walking, flutter on the thorn-trees near them, a testimony to the Irish faith in the eternal wonderfulness of life. There are many secular stories of the saints, too, which still continue among the people—stories of brave adventures in the old

times, and of timely interventions in modern days.

I heard a gruesome story not long ago of the help given by a saint to a young married woman in time of need. She was married to an old farmer, who lived in a lonely place, a mile and more away from any other house, and she had not been married long when one night, in the middle of the night, he took sick without any warning. She got up and called the servant-girl to go and get help, and while the girl was away the old man died on her. She laid him out, and then sat down to watch till the neighbours came. Suddenly the corpse rose up in the bed and began to make the most fearful faces, for it had died without anointment, and the devil was in it. It would lie back and then sit up and begin making faces again, and the poor woman was nearly at her wits' end with terror. It kept doing this for a long time, and she praying and nearly out of her mind, when a knock came at the door, and she let in a tall man, dressed something like a soldier, and with a piece of a stick, or a wand, in his hand. He went over to the side of the bed where the corpse was, and touched it with the stick, and it lay back on the bed calm and quiet. Then he sat down to watch with the woman, and every time the corpse moved he touched it again, and it subsided.

He stayed with her till near dawn, and just before he was going he turned to her and put the

stick into her hand, and said, "Take this, and whenever he begins to make faces, just touch him on the shoulder with the stick, and he'll lie down again. He died without oil, and the devil's in him, and, if I hadn't come, he would have got up and torn you to pieces." She thanked him for his kindness, and he was turning to go away, when she said, "But before you go, you must tell me who it is I have to thank for what you've just done. I see you're not a priest, and I don't think you're a doctor, but who are you?" "Well," he said, "do you remember last All Hallows' Eve, when you and the other girls were drawing lots for what saints you would have to protect you during the year, and you drew Saint Dominic? The other girls laughed at you, but you said you were quite content with the saint you had drawn. Well, I'm Saint Dominic, and this night I have come to reward you." So he left her the stick, and, every time the corpse would try to get up and make faces, she hit it a tap, and it lay down again. In regard to this story, I may say it is still a Hallowe'en game in some parts of Catholic Ireland to draw lots out of a hat for guardian saints.

I have not yet touched upon one of the most interesting of all the streams of story-telling which are to be found in Ireland—the legends of the heroes who loom over the beginnings of Irish history with something of the immense glory of the gods and the demi-gods of Greece.

Lady Gregory has put the world in her debt by collecting these stories in at least one imperishable volume, "Gods and Fighting Men," and in another which is full of beautiful things, "Cuchullain of Muirthemne." Most of these stories she found in books and in manuscripts, but bits of them she heard, too, from the lips of country people with inherited memories. In proof of the long memories of the people, she tells us in one of her essays how some time ago a poem was taken down from a countryman, and how the same poem was afterwards found in a generations-old manuscript in the Irish Academy. "There was only one word different," she says, "between the written and the spoken version, and in that it was manifest that the pen had made the slip and not the tongue." These poems and stories, naturally, are remembered most clearly where the people speak Irish, and the exactness with which a poem like that just mentioned has been handed down through the generations helps us to understand how the Homeric epics may have survived so long before they were ever put into writing.

Speaking about heroic stories reminds me of the surprise I once felt, when I was in County Sligo, to hear from a farmer a story which Mr Neil Munro has told in his most delightful book, "The Lost Pibroch."

Sligo is a county overmarked with little circular forts which some associate with fairies, some with old Danish invaders. The farmer was talking to

me about the Danes, when a land-agent who was present said to him, "Don't they say the Danes used to make some kind of beer out of heather?" The farmer said yes, but that no one now knew how they did it, and then he told us the story of the chieftain who sacrificed his sons and himself rather than let the Danes know the secret of his clan. The story was more blurred than in Mr Munro's version, but it was essentially the same, and those who wish to read one of the best of short stories should turn to Mr Munro's "The Secret of the Heather Ale." Some people may imagine that the farmer read the story in "The Lost Pibroch," but I am certain that it came from tradition, and that Mr Munro himself heard the story from some old Gael on a Scottish hill-side.

Lately, many enthusiastic people have been going among the Irish-speakers and taking down the old stories, and a good many of these have been published in the Irish language. Most of the stories which have been collected have been in the nature of fairy-tales rather than heroic and semi-historical legends, but even of the latter there has been a considerable share. Naturally, many of the stories are only remembered in hints and glimpses, and the imagination of the people has too often become confused as a result of poverty and long subjection. Lady Gregory gives us an instance of the mixed condition into which some of the stories have fallen. She was told on Slieve Echtge that "Oisín and Finn took



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the lead for strength, and Samson, too, he had great strength." "I would rather hear about the Irish strong men," she said. "Well," was the reply, "and Samson was of the Irish race, all the world was Irish in those times, and he killed the Philistines, and the eyes were picked out of him after. He was said to be the strongest, but I think myself Finn MacCumhall was stronger."

I believe Irish imaginations will return soon to a consciousness of that literature of beauty and nobleness in which it expressed so long ago its abundant joy in living. It is impossible to predict exactly the effect which this will have on Irish life and art and literature. We cannot be sure that in the result Ireland will produce a great drama, like the legend-loving Greek, or a great music-drama, like the legend-loving German. We can be sure, however, that Irish life will become infinitely richer when it is coloured with a sense of its heroic circumstances. It will be put, too, in the way of building up a great home literature, for memory and imagination will be restored to it, and these, with character and passion, are the makers of all the beautiful things in the world. Of memory and imagination—even of character and passion—the Irish heroic stories are clear and inexhaustible wells.

CHAPTER V

SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN

IF you wish to obtain both the happiest and the unhappiest look at contemporary Ireland, you must go into the National Schools—the word “National,” of course, being used in a strictly Pickwickian sense. The children, vivacious, alert, quick-eyed, are a golden proof that, despite all the emigration and decay and poverty, Ireland is not yet a ruined country, but has even now within her the makings of a pleasant and virile nation. The school buildings, on the other hand, too often bear witness to the fact that by the authorities who govern Ireland the child is made of less account than the criminal. Only a revolutionist at the present moment would propose that the authorities should make the schoolhouse as clean, say, as a church, or as comfortable as a police-barracks.

At the same time there is a great deal of mournful nonsense talked about the schools of Ireland. One sometimes hears the National Schools spoken of as though they were for the most part filthy barns—with birds flying in and out through the holes in the roof, or, should the school not be ventilated in this ready way, haunts of

fetid and disease-laden air in which children grow up with pale faces, dull eyes, and songless voices. There is no doubt that many of the town schools, especially in Belfast, are overcrowded and unhealthy, and that some of the country schools are more exposed to the moods of the sky than is pardonable in a wet country. It is equally true, however, that many of the schools are clean and merry places, and that children bloom healthily in them, and grow up as unconsumptive-looking as clergymen.

As a matter of fact, the condition of the schools depends largely upon the individual temperaments of that badly-treated body of men and women, the National school-teachers. The school-teacher is sometimes represented to us as a pauper ignoramus, a bumptious loather of his trade, who is the fourth person in the tyrannical village hierarchy, the other three being the priest or parson, the gombeen-man and the policeman. He is unquestionably as often as not a pauper; he begins his career at a salary of £58—in the case of women teachers the salary is £48—but, on the whole, considering their miserable opportunities, I am inclined to think that no class of Irish men and women serve their country more faithfully according to their lights than the teachers in the National Schools.

I have said that the good or bad condition of any particular school is due for the most part to the teacher who happens to be in charge of it.

The National Board provides no caretaker to see that the floors are swept, or the walls hung with pictures, or the fires lit. If the floor is to be swept, the teacher must either do it himself, or get some of the pupils to do it for him. If pictures are needed for the walls, the teacher must paint them himself—which, thank heaven, he can seldom do—or buy them with his wages, or tear them out of the English magazines. Worse still, if the school is to be kept warm during the winter, the teacher must once more put his fingers into his purse and provide his share of the coal or turf supply. The custom is, no doubt, that the pupils, or their parents, should contribute either in money or in kind to the keeping up of the fires. In the towns and in districts where turf is not used, the contribution is usually in money.

In some of the poorer districts where turf is plentiful, however, the labourer's child may still be seen of a winter's morning carrying his sod of turf to the schoolhouse as his share of the burden of the expenses of a warm, if otherwise unsatisfactory, education. The farmer as a rule spares his son such an indignity by sending round an occasional cart-load of turf to the school during the cold months. The amount of fuel supplied in this way, it may be said, is rarely sufficient for the needs of the school, and either the pupils must be left to starve in the cold, or the teacher has to pay for the extra amount required. I have heard of children—children who were not given to blub-

bering either—crying regularly as they were sent off to school on winter mornings. These were bare-footed children, and the schools had stone floors, and were without fires, so that the tears, perhaps, were not without justification.

Obviously, the Irish teachers' lines are not cast in superabundant places. I have been all the more surprised by the energy and cheerfulness with which some of them throw themselves into their work, and with the clean bright look they manage to put on their schools. Some of the schools it would be impossible to keep clean or bright. I have seen schools in the County of Tipperary in which holes had been worn in the floor by the drip of the rain through corresponding holes in the roof, and where the ivy had pushed its way through numberless cracks, and was clambering in ease and disease over the walls and the ceiling. On the other hand, I have seen schools in County Limerick, where everything was neat and sound and healthy, and where portraits of Wolfe Tone and Douglas Hyde and Daniel O'Connell, and other notable Irishmen, looked inspiringly from the walls, not to mention pardonable prettinesses in colour from the Christmas numbers. These schools were little nests of music and cheerfulness—centres of country light and eager spirits. If they were inefficient, it was not the fault of the teachers, but of a system of government which discourages the people of Ireland from taking an interest in education.

This brings us to the fact that a priest, parson or minister, is almost invariably the manager of the National School, and that, even though he may not care very much about education himself, he is inclined to be suspicious when any one else threatens to care about it. In the Protestant churches, the clergyman too often regards the teacher as a useful hack, good for playing the organ on Sunday, or teaching a Sunday-school class, and so forth, and under the Catholic priest the teacher is not usually said to enjoy any greater esteem.

The odd thing is that, in spite of all the sectarian turmoil and tyranny in Irish education, the National Schools are among the most non-sectarian imaginable. Go into a priest-managed school in Ireland, and you will hear no word of religious teaching outside the hour set apart for it; you will see no statue of the Mother of God, surrounded with faded flowers, in a nook in the walls, such as you will see in a priest-managed school in England. If you must compare the buildings to barns, they resemble barns in nothing so much as in their non-sectarian, not to say non-religious, character. The Christian Brothers, a lay Catholic order, have a number of schools in the more prosperous centres, free of the control of the National Board and provided with the emblems of religion. An ex-pupil of one of these schools told me how he and his companions used to despise the ordinary non-sectarian priest-managed schools as institutions that had "given in to the enemy."

One happy consequence of this absence of sectarianism from the atmosphere of the schools is that Protestant children attend Catholic schools, and Catholic children Protestant schools, in much greater numbers than is generally realised. Three years ago, there were 8559 Protestant pupils studying in schools exclusively under Catholic teachers, and 5174 Catholic pupils in schools exclusively under Protestant teachers. These figures are, I admit, low enough, in comparison with the size of the school-going population, but they show that the religious compartments in Irish education are not quite water-tight. (The Ten Commandments, by the way, are, by order of the National Board, hung on squares of card-board from the walls of every school-building, but I never heard of any of the pupils of either religion leaving school any the worse for this.) I have seen Protestant children enthusiastically learning Irish, and singing Irish songs in Catholic schools in the south. This, too, was in a district where a few years ago political passion ran so high that the priest called for a boycott, not only of the policemen in the district, but of the policemen's children. In the Catholic parts of Ireland, people have often been boycotted for political reasons, practically never for religious reasons.

One of the many things which I dislike in the educational system in Ireland is the early age at which children are permitted to begin going to school. This seems all the worse as the ordinary

school hours are from ten in the morning till three in the afternoon. I was in a country school lately where some of the children were only three years old, and I do not like to see an infant thrust thus early into the atmosphere of learning, unless where there are crabbed or debauched parents darkening the home. The evil sort of parents, I may say in passing, are rare, outside the slums in the big cities of Ireland. Even in the slums—and there are slums in Dublin that would disfigure the civilisation of any place or any period—cruelty of the fiendish kind, of which one occasionally hears among the poor and degenerate in England, is practically unknown. A high official in the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty for Children has told me that there is no comparison between England and Ireland in regard to the treatment of children. One occasionally hears, of course, of a drunken mother who parts with her child to proselytising agents for the sake of quietness and gin. It is also true that, in cases of parental cruelty, the clergy usually have the child removed to some humane atmosphere long before things have reached the stage demanding the attention of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Still, from all I have seen and heard, I am inclined to think that the lot of the Irish child is, so far as its parents know how to make it so, usually a not unenviable one.

This is in explanation of the pleasant, variable faces one sees so often on the children in the Irish

schools. They are clean faces, too, as children's faces go, and one sometimes sees a basin of water in the school-porch where they may wash their hands as they go in. They are, for the most part, bare-footed, some from necessity, some from choice—at least, in the summer—for boots are becoming commoner in Ireland every day. I have known children who were sent off from home wearing boots, but who took these and their stockings off as soon as they were out of reach of their mother's eye, in order that their feet might enjoy the greater coolness and liberty along the grassy sides of the road. There is, it is pleasant to know, an almost perfect democracy of feeling in the Irish schools. The farmer's daughter in her boots and her bright pinafore wears no airs of superiority over the bare-footed labourer's child with too few buttons and too many raggednesses showing in her faded dress. The boys mix freely in their games as in their classes, and many friendships begin which are only broken when differences of wealth and environment at last compel the grown-up youths into separate worlds.

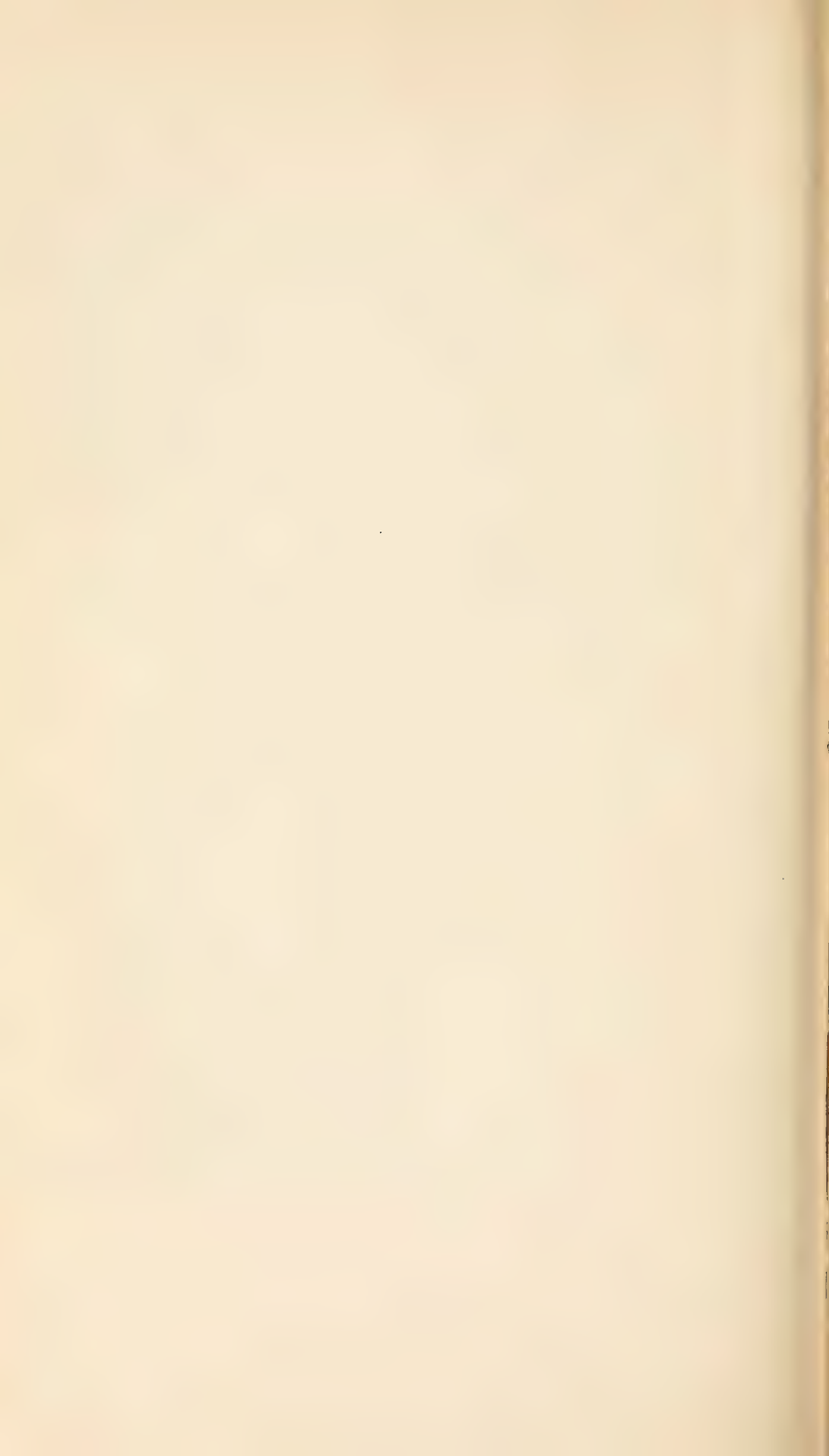
I hope I have said nothing to give the impression that everything, or indeed anything, in the Irish educational system is in a fairly satisfactory condition. I have merely stated certain human facts in answer to those who, for political reasons or from a tradition of sentimentalism, are always drawing pictures of Ireland as a ruin and a helpless desolation. The Irish schools are not the schools

of a ruined and helpless people. They are the schools rather of a people who have been for a long time intellectually aimless—who have allowed outsiders to take their money and spend it for them, and to dictate the lines upon which their education should be run. This, indeed, is the worst that you can say of the schools. However white may be their walls, however lively and lovely the faces of the children, however blameless the intentions of the teachers, the National Schools were not established to meet the needs of Ireland, but to fulfil certain political objects. Instead of fitting boys and girls to live useful and charming lives in Ireland, they were used as a means of making the children forget that there was any such country as Ireland. It will be no harm, perhaps, to give some well-known instances of this.

In the early half of last century, when the school readers were being prepared, it was proposed by a Scotch Presbyterian minister on the controlling Board to include Sir Walter Scott's lines, "Breathes there a man with soul so dead," etc, in one of them. Archbishop Whately, who had been entrusted by the English Government with the work of civilising Ireland, caught sight of the words, and, realising how indecent was the sentiment they might convey to the imaginations of Irish children, insisted upon their omission. Poetry about things like Irish harpers was treated in the same summary way, and children were taught to repeat, instead of the sincere songs of their own



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people, a pseudo-religious jingle containing the words :—

I thank the goodness and the grace
That on my birth have smiled,
And made me in these Christian days
A happy English child.

The chief lesson to be learned by the school children was ignorance—not to say contempt—of Ireland and everything Irish, and reverence for England and everything English. Even in districts where Irish was the only language spoken, the children were taught that English and not Irish was their native language. “On the east of Ireland,” runs a passage in one of the archiepiscopal school-books, “is England, where the Queen lives ; many people who live in Ireland were born in England, and we speak the same language, and are called the same nation.” This passage was written, be it noted, at a time when the Irish language was still spoken by probably half the Irish people.

The authorities, however, did not like the Irish language and so they affected to believe that it did not exist. Teachers who knew no Irish were put in charge of schools where the pupils knew no English, and the absurd spectacle was common of a teacher trying to instruct in reading, writing and arithmetic children who did not understand a word he said. I met an English-speaking teacher the other day who began his career in a Galway school in which all the children were exclusively

Irish speaking. I asked him how on earth he managed. "Damned badly," he said with a twinkle. It is only fair to him to say that, if he performed de-Irishising work, he did it reluctantly and not with a punitive enthusiasm, as some of the teachers did. In many places, teacher, priest and parent combined with the authorities in stamping out all knowledge of the native language from the minds of the children. The children were forbidden to speak any Irish in the schools, and they carried little tally-sticks hung round their necks so that, every time they lapsed into Irish in their homes, their parents might cut a notch in these and the teacher might award as many strokes of the cane as he found notches in the tally-stick on the next morning.

It is difficult to forgive a generation of parents, priests, politicians and teachers who thus flogged the children of the country out of the knowledge of their natural speech. Many parents, it is clear, looking at the course of events in the world, came to the conclusion that English was the language of success and Irish the language of decay and starvation. If they punished their children for being Irish, they thought they were punishing bread-and-butter into their stomachs, if not the bread of life into their souls. Curious to relate, this idea is not dead among Irish-speaking parents even to-day. Those who know English, though they speak Irish to each other and to grown-up neighbours, very often drop into English when they

address their children. They still think that English is the language of respectability—an idea that is only dying slowly under the persistent assaults of the Gaelic League propaganda. The priest nearly always preaches in it, the member of Parliament orates in it, the newspapers are written in it, and how, in face of all this, is an average badly-educated parent to guess that the praise of the Irish language is anything but the jingle-jangle of hare-brained agitators?

It will be seen from what I have said that the National Schools were intended to destroy any traces of an Irish civilisation that were left by the early part of last century. They have been fairly successful in accomplishing the aims of their founders, and there were probably fewer signs of an interesting and distinct civilisation in Ireland during the closing years of the nineteenth century than at any other period of the country's history. The present adult population of Ireland is probably the least Irish, the least interesting, the least capable of beauty of thought and effort, that ever inherited the five provinces. The present generation of growing children is likely to prove the very opposite. Moderate people like myself believe that there is at present growing up to manhood and womanhood in Ireland a race of boys and girls who will make sure the foundations of a new civilisation, and so leave a long memory after them.

Education in Ireland, when it ceased to be a

violent political attack on the spirit of the people, did so in order to take on, not the fair colours of nationality, but a kind of dull negative hue. The training-colleges, through which the teachers have to pass for want of a university education, do nothing to encourage the knowledge and spirit of Ireland in those whose duty it will one day be to capture the imaginations and shape the minds of Irish children. Consequently, manned by teachers without any national knowledge, the schools have always been great breeding-grounds for boy clerkships in the British Civil Service. The child has never been trained at school to live in an Irish home, to work on an Irish farm or in an Irish shop. If he has shown any signs of ability, he has generally been taught to despise Ireland as a sphere of labour for so promising a genius, and to set his heart on some Government position, the salary of which seems princely to him in his narrow home. Too many fresh-faced boys have been wasted on these London clerkships to allow such dreams of wealth to mislead the people permanently, and both teachers and parents are beginning to know that a boy clerk's wage in London is not a living wage, and that, poor as it is, it may be brought to a sudden end in three or four years. Consequently, fewer Irish children are now sent over to London with their incipient brains than used to be. Still, the bad tradition of teaching remains, and the Irish boy and girl are for the most part even now educated on the supposition

that they have not a country of their own, but will one day emigrate. One of the arguments used against the revival of the Irish language was : “What use will it be to anybody outside Ireland ?” As though every language did not first grow up, not because it was suited for use in foreign countries, but because it was suited for use in the country in which it was native and vital.

I myself, who was brought up in a district rich in history and in heroic tales, was never allowed to know at school a single human fact suggesting that this country around me and I had any relation to each other—or even, indeed, that this country existed, except in the geographical sense. Cuchullain, the hero of Ulster, is to my mind one of the great figures in the world’s imaginative literature. His story is as wonderful and varied as the story of Achilles, a thousand times more wonderful and varied than the story of Hercules. Yet I, living in the capital of Ulster, was taught my fair share about Achilles and Hercules, but heard never a word about Cuchullain. Near my father’s house were mounds that had once been the dwelling-places of Cuchullain’s companions, the Knights of the Red Branch, but my father had been told nothing about these places, and so he could communicate none of their mystery to me. I say that it is an evil thing to let all this beauty, beauty of memory and imagination, go to waste and not use it to enrich the lives of Irish children. History, again, meant to me, just as literature did, some-

thing about anywhere except Ireland. We had the flaming youth of Red Hugh O'Donnell at our doors, and the humours and heroisms of the O'Neills, and the passionate drama of Wolfe Tone, and the passionate sacrifice of Henry Joy M'Cracken. Never, however, during all my schooldays do I remember hearing a single intelligent fact stated in regard to any of these men or anybody like them. I do not blame my teachers. They, too, were brought up in a system which aimed at educating Irish boys and girls largely by ignoring their own country. Some of them were unsurpassed teachers on their own lines, but they never realised that the object of Irish education ought to be to produce a race of men and women who would be useful and many-sided citizens of Ireland.

It may be argued that Irish education is no worse-off than English in this respect, and that the English schools lay very little stress on history. The case is different, however. The English child, at least, is not taught to ignore Waterloo and Trafalgar and the Armada as though they were shameful things. He is brought up in the idea that his is a country to be proud of. The trend of Irish education, on the other hand, is largely—or was until the day before yesterday—to convince a child that his is a country of which to be ashamed. Sir Horace Plunkett has put the case in regard to this aspect of Irish education so well that I shall quote a few of his sentences and so anticipate the

many people who in all honesty and innocence will accuse me of exaggeration. "The national factor in Ireland," he writes in "Ireland in the New Century," "has been studiously eliminated from national education, and Ireland is perhaps the only country in Europe where it was part of the settled policy of those who had the guidance of education to ignore the literature, history, arts, and tradition of the people. It was a fatal policy, for it obviously tended to stamp their native country in the eyes of Irishmen with the badge of inferiority and to extinguish the sense of healthy self-respect which comes from the consciousness of high national ancestry and traditions. This policy, rigidly adhered to for many years, almost extinguished native culture among Irishmen, but it did not succeed in making another form of culture acceptable to them. It dulled the intelligence of the people, impaired their interest in their own surroundings, stimulated emigration by teaching them to look on other countries as more agreeable places to live in, and made Ireland almost a social desert. Men and women without culture or knowledge of literature or of music have succeeded a former generation who were passionately interested in these things, an interest which extended down even to the wayside cabin."

I do not think you could damn an educational system much more comprehensively than Sir Horace Plunkett damns the Irish "National" system in these measured words. His words are

true, however, not only of the National Schools, but of almost all the primary schools in Ireland, except some of those belonging to the Christian Brothers. The private schools, to which the rich and comfortable send their children in the towns, are roomier and more respectable than the National Schools, but in the essentials of a worthy Irish educational establishment they are even more miserably lacking. Some of them are run by very able ladies; some of them are run by very silly ladies; practically all of them are run by ladies who seem never to have heard of Ireland.

As for the secondary schools, it is not an exaggeration to say that where the primary schools have chastised the country with whips, the secondary schools have chastised it with scorpions. They have been absolutely inefficient in accomplishing what ought to have been their sole large end—strengthening the character and affecting the culture of Ireland. As the secondary schools—public and private—have progressed, the country instead of approaching anything in the shape of culture has receded further and further away from it. These schools are efficient machines for only one purpose—the preparation of boys and girls for competitive examinations, ranging from the Intermediate Board's examinations at home to the examinations for the English Civil Service. The Intermediate Exhibitions are well worth getting—they amounted to from £20 in the Preparatory Grade to £40 in the Senior Grade in my own day

—and Ireland in its teens makes a rush for them to the exclusion of practically every other intellectual interest. In the result, never surely were schools, taught by able masters and mistresses and filled with clever boys and girls, so barren of use or beauty. One of the most brilliant educationists in Ireland told me on one occasion that nowhere in his experience had he found a higher level of intelligence than in Ulster, but that, owing to the lifeless state in which the intellect of the people had been left by the schools and other provincial forces, it was useless, in his opinion, to look for any good thing like literature from that quarter for many generations. Now literature is by no means everything, or even the chief thing, in this world. But the utter absence of it from a country shows that the schools of that country are in a dangerous condition.

The odd thing to be noted in this connection is that the Irish secondary schools, if they were in England, would be excellent institutions. Many of them are simply good things in the wrong place. Thus, they are quite unlike the National Schools, which are often bad things in the wrong place. In the secondary schools, if you take the trouble, you may certainly learn English well, you may learn the Classics well, you may learn physical and mathematical science well, you may sometimes learn even French and German well. The worst of it is, you are taught everything as though your brain were a fact-store

—or at the best a good-taste-store—instead of a living thing to be used for the building and beautifying of the world within the borders of your own country first and anywhere else you like afterwards.

Many of the Irish secondary schools are boarding-schools, but neither the boarding-schools nor the day-schools have many points of comparison with the more famous public schools of England. For one thing, the boys are mostly the sons of not too wealthy parents, and the need to earn a living is so pressing that comparatively few of them stay on long enough to enter one of the professions or the English Civil Service. As a result—or as one of the results—Irish boys have not time to play cricket with the perfection common among English boys, though they sometimes try. Besides, by good luck, the Irish schools make real cricket-playing impossible by rising for the holidays at the end of June and remaining closed till the beginning of September. Again, Irish school-boys practically never wear any distinctive uniform—nothing but a cap with the initials of their school sewn on it. They have a pleasant disordered air in a class-room, some of them sitting about in their overcoats, others disdaining such trappings of weakness. They are an eager, quick, conversational crowd, difficult for a nervous master to keep in hand. People who have taught schools both in England and Ireland tell me, that, after having been accus-

tomed to Ireland, the decorum of English children comes upon one as a shock. When I read Mr Kipling's "Stalky and Co.," and saw it denounced as being quite unlike English school-life, I felt like putting in a claim for it as in some measure a picture of Irish school-life. Mr Kipling's unruly, vigorous, adventurous boys are not unlike Irish boys. Irish boys, however, are much less sentimental than English boys about headmasters or indeed any masters, or about the "old school" or about each other. Irish girls, too, gush and sentimentalise over their mistresses to a much less degree than school-girls in England. Take another point. Irish boys of all ages mix with each other much more freely than boys in England seem to do. There is no "cock-of-the-walking," on the one hand, and no deep bowing to authority, on the other. Priggishness is a rare vice among them, and so is bullying. Possibly, fifty per cent. of them or so do not reverence the truth, when a master is on the hunt for it, but what school-boys do? They are among the cleanest-minded boys to be found, I should imagine. At the school at which I was, only a disreputable few of us ever aimed at anything like Rabelaisianism in our conversation, and, as for vice of conduct, it was hinted at by hardly more than two of the boys, who were looked on, one tolerantly, the other dislikingly, as bad eggs. Schools vary a great deal in this regard, I know, and there is plenty of filth spoken—I once had a

taste for it myself—here and there in Ireland. From all I have heard, however, I should judge that a boy at school has a better chance of enjoying a clean time in Ireland than in most countries.

There are other ways of demoralising children besides putting them in immoral company, and the Irish schools in many cases tend to encourage the most dreary form of snobbishness—what is called “shoneenism.” This is said to be especially true of some of the Convent schools, which aim at making lively-minded Irish girls “respectable” and “more English than the English.” They teach any music except Irish music, any language except the Irish language, any literature except Irish literature. They train everything except the character, the body and the intelligence. They make up for the want of these with a plethora of “accomplishments.” They inculcate that lowly and reverent obedience to one’s “betters” which still keeps alive the essentials of the slave system in so many countries nominally free. They praise success, and one feels that, if it were in their power to prevent it, there would be no vivid national movement in Ireland. This is, of course, not true of all the Convent schools, but it is true of enough of them to make what I have said fair as a generalisation. It is due partly to the fact that so many of the nuns are foreigners, who do not realise that there is such a thing as a distinct Irish nation. It is one of the anomalies of Irish life that parents, the

majority of whom are nominally Nationalists, should continue to send their daughters to these schools.

I know of one school, for instance, where during the Boer War the children were encouraged to wear little Union Jacks and to sing "God save the Queen" in anticipation of a visit from Queen Victoria. One of the girls who refused to surrender her independence even to keep the favour of her teachers, appeared in class one day with a Kruger button instead of the usual British symbol. She was ordered to take it off at once, but stoutly refused. She was threatened with all sorts of punishments, but still she held out. In the end, I believe, the girl went home and remained there till the Royal visit was over, her mother declaring in answer to her indignant teachers that she wished her daughter to be trained in obedience and good manners, but not in loyalty to foreign rule. From a Unionist point of view, the nuns may seem to have been justified in their attitude all through. Consider, on the other hand, what this attitude meant in Ireland. It meant that the children were quietly having wrung out of them all the ideals which were in the atmosphere of their homes. It meant that the gentle and unselfish ideal of a nation was being deliberately displaced by the ideal of bigness and success and worldly power. Need I say again, that I do not wish all the Convent schools of Ireland to be taken as included in this indictment? Some of these

schools do all in their power to become a real educational force in the life of the Irish nation.

It may be doubted, however, whether on the whole the influence of the religious schools on Irish life is a healthy one. I say this, of course, not because the schools make the children too religious, but because they make them too "refined," in the sense that they unfit them for the mixed surroundings to which they are accustomed at home. A farmer's daughter who has been educated at a Convent, sometimes loses all taste for settling down on a farm. Her education has trained her, not to be a good farmer's wife, but to be an amiable ornament in the drawing-room. She belongs to a different world from her soil-stained father and his neighbours and his neighbours' sons. The horror of their home-life, in its carelessness of the niceties, its very earthy unrefinement, has undoubtedly driven many Irish girls into the nunneries for a refuge. Catholic parents tell you of these things and speak complainingly of the spread of the educational religious orders, but still they send their children to the religious schools, for they are commonly the best to be had in the district. Teachers in the ordinary schools also complain. They say that it does not pay a teacher to work up a school to a point of too great excellence, for, if he does, the religious orders come in and establish another school, and take away his pupils from him.

The spread of the religious orders is one of

the most remarkable phenomena of our time. In Loughglynn, in the County of Roscommon, the Franciscan nuns are now in possession of Lord Dillon's great mansion and grounds, but I believe the influence of these ladies on the district in which they have settled is a good one. In Nenagh, in County Tipperary, the nuns have found a still stranger home, for there they occupy the old gaol, and the statue of the Virgin now stands over the porch where two innocent men were brought out and hanged a good many years ago—the last public hanging that took place in Nenagh. It is said, by the way, that ruin came upon the house of every member of the jury, who were stupefied by drink into condemning those innocent men, some of them going mad, some dying in drink and poverty, some of horrible diseases. People tell you, further, that when the authorities had a lamp put outside the gaol at the place of hanging, it flickered and went out, and, no matter what they did or how calm the evening was, it would still go out in the most ghostly way. It was thought that the troubled spirits of the dead moved about there, disturbing the scene of their great wrong. Since the nuns came, however, the lamp has begun to burn brightly and the ghosts trouble the place no more.

Now that I have had my bad say about a great deal in modern Irish education, let me add that there are signs of a new life—to use a phrase

that is becoming threadbare—springing up in the country and especially in the elementary schools. Education is now bi-lingual in many of the districts where the children speak Irish,¹ though sometimes a lazy teacher hides the fact that his pupils are Irish-speaking in order that he may continue along the old, useless, indolent paths. In schools outside these districts, bi-lingual education is still forbidden, and teachers are not encouraged too strongly to make Irish one of the ordinary subjects of study. Sometimes, too, the teacher knows no Irish. The Gaelic League provides a certain number of travelling teachers, who go about from school to school on bicycles and give weekly or bi-weekly lessons in Irish to the children. The ordinary teachers themselves sometimes help the language forward by teaching Irish songs during the singing lesson, though I was horrified on one occasion, when I asked a child for a song in a very Irish district, and she broke out with “I never loved a dear gazelle.” I suppose Ireland is the only part of the civilised

¹ The bi-lingual programme is now (1909) in force in 174 schools as compared with 126 last year.

Fees were paid for Irish as an extra subject in the year 1908 in 1507 national schools, 46,006 being the number of pupils in average attendance for whom fees were paid. The fees amounted to £10,227, 16s. 8d.

The number of pupils who were receiving instruction in Irish as an optional subject on December 31st, 1908, was 56,800 approximately.

There were 385 evening schools opened for the 1908-9 session. Irish was taught in 185 of these evening schools.

world where anyone would sing a song like that nowadays.

The school-books in general are becoming more Irish than they used to be. Nationality is as yet permitted only in moderate doses, but the great thing is that it should be permitted at all. It has not yet made as great progress in the secondary as in the elementary schools. Even there, however, I hear Irish history is being taught much less contemptuously than it used to be. Of late, too, we have had fine prospects opened out by the way in which important girls' schools like Alexandra College in Dublin—one of the principal Protestant schools in the country—have shown an inclination to play a significant part in the life of Ireland. Add to this the fact that last year a Catholic boys' school, St Enda's, was opened in Dublin as an institution intended to be as Irish as Eton or the City of London School is English.

St Enda's, comfortably set in a beautiful garden, is the fruit of a passionate enthusiasm. It is an effort to accomplish the dream of the headmaster, Mr P. H. Pearse, a barrister, a scholar, and the editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the official journal of the Gaelic League. In the hall as one enters one is faced by a lunette representing Cuchullain at the heroic feats of his boyhood. In another room are pictures by Mr George Russell (A. E.), Mr Jack Yeats, and others. High on the walls of the principal class-room is a line of the names of the great heroes of Ireland, coming down to Wolfe

Tone and Robert Emmet and Thomas Davis. The teaching is carried on partly in Irish and partly in English. When I visited the school during the past spring a class was in progress in which a lesson in Irish phonetics was being given first in Irish, then in English. The English classes, of course, are carried on through the medium of English, the French through the medium of French, and so forth, but history, geography, science, and similar subjects are taught now in the one language and now in the other. Everybody in the establishment is an Irish-speaker except the cook. The gardener is an especially useful person, as in the hours devoted to nature study he can be turned into a familiar teacher and give easy lessons in the Irish names of the flowers and the trees. Of course, there is a playing-ground where Irish games, like hurling and Gaelic football are played, and there is also a ball-alley—an essentially Irish thing to be found in even the most anti-Irish schools in the country. Tennis is played by the boys during summer. A good many of the pupils wear the Irish kilt—a comely costume, though there are still some of us who thank God we have trousers in the tubes of which to hide our crooked limbs. I have said enough, I think, to give an idea of the Irish atmosphere of this pioneer school. It is likely before long to have a good many imitators—especially on that day, sure to come at last, when the new National University will make Irish an

essential subject for matriculation and so force the secondary schools to give it a prominent place in their curricula.

Irish education, however, will never be in a satisfactory condition until the Irish people have taken it largely into their own hands. That the British Government is not fit to control it is proved, if by nothing else, by the way in which they consider it less important than the policing of the country. In Scotland, as Mr Barry O'Brien points out in "Dublin Castle and the Irish People," the cost per head of the population is 2s. 6d. for Police and 8s. 8d. for Education. In Ireland it is 6s. 7d. for Police and 6s. 6d. for Education. This shows how thoroughly necessary it is that the Irish people should take over the control of the secular part of it, and put an end to a state of affairs which neither the British Government nor the clergy as a whole¹ show any mind to remedy.

¹ A Bill was recently introduced by Mr Craig, M.P., in the English Parliament, to throw a portion of the school expenses on the local rates, and the Central Council of the Irish Clerical Managers has passed a resolution in opposition to it. This body, however, offers to make the managers responsible for half the expenses of heating, cleansing, and the sanitation of schools, the Treasury supplying the other half.

CHAPTER VI

WAKES AND FUNERALS

No Irish custom, I suppose, is more famous than that of "waking" the dead. The custom goes back to pagan times, when we are told great persons were usually waked for seven nights and days. The introduction of Christianity seems to have lengthened the ceremonies, for St Patrick's wake lasted twelve nights, during which lights were kept burning and, as Dr Joyce reminds us, "night was made like day with the blaze of torches."

The modern wake seems to be but a pale reflection, a bewildered memory, of the ceremonies which used to follow a death till about a hundred years ago. In the old days, according to an account preserved by Lady Wilde, the room or barn in which the dead body lay was hung with "branches of evergreen and festoons of laurel and holly." On a bed lay the corpse, surrounded by branches of green leaves. The mourning women came in and sat down on the ground in a circle. In the centre one of them, cloaked and hooded, began the funeral wail, the others joining in the chorus. The lament ceased at intervals only to

be raised again, and, when it was over, the women went out, and their places were taken by a new crowd of people who performed a kind of mystery play. Before the play began, there was pipe-music, and whiskey was served round. With respect to the plays acted on these occasions, some of them appear to have been serious and symbolic. Others contained farcical elements like the mystery plays in all Christian countries during the middle ages. We hear, for instance, of "one called 'Hold the light,' where the passion of the Lord Christ is travestied with grotesque imitation." Many of them were full of sarcastic references to Christianity—references which are to be found also in traditional Irish literature—and the priests fought hard to put an end to these irreverent relics of the pagan spirit. As regards the effectiveness of some of these old dramas, Lady Wilde repeats an interesting criticism of an "intelligent peasant" who had been to Dublin and had been taken to the theatre. "I have now," he said on his return, "seen the great English actors, and heard plays in the English tongue, but poor and dull they seemed to me after the acting of our own people at the wakes and fairs: for it is a truth, the English cannot make us weep and laugh as I have seen the crowds with us when the players played and the poets recited their stories."

While on the subject of the old funeral customs, it may be of interest to note that some of them at least were common both to Catholic and

Protestant Ireland. When John Wesley was in Ireland in 1750, he preached at a burial service, and was greatly shocked by the "Irish howl" which followed. This was the "dismal inarticulate yell" of the four mourning women who were hired to stand by the grave and raise the lament. "But I saw not one that shed a tear," comments Wesley; "for that, it seems, was not in their bargain."

Wakes are sufficiently common both in Catholic and Protestant Ireland to-day, but they are fast becoming a discredited institution. In many dioceses the Catholic Bishops have absolutely forbidden them. The priests sometimes go so far as to threaten to withhold the rites of Christian burial if the wake is not dispensed with. The reason of this is, of course, not that the wake is a relic of paganism, but that it is apt to cause an excessive amount of drinking and extravagance. As a result of the determined attitude of the clergy, wakes are now practically unknown in some parts of the country. When a man dies, his body is almost at once put into the coffin and carried off to the chapel, where it remains till the day of the funeral. If he dies early in the morning, his body may be removed to the chapel towards the evening of the same day. If he dies in the evening, the coffin is taken to the church on the following morning. Thus he has a sort of double funeral.

I saw the first part of a funeral like this when

I was in a town in County Tipperary some time ago. Every shop in the place had half the shutters up an hour or two in advance, out of respect to the funeral procession that was to pass along the streets. The dead man was a man without note, yet a great number of the townspeople, including some women, turned out to walk after the hearse. The coffin was left in a corner of the church near the door, and most of those who had followed it went into the church to say a prayer before returning home. It was as silent a ceremony as you could imagine.

Compare with this the wakes that still survive in many parts of Ireland. Nowhere, I imagine, is their traditional form preserved more fully than in Connemara. Here, as Mr W. P. Ryan tells us, "the elders sit by the fire and tell stories of the Fianna; the younger folk, the girls at one side, the boys at the other, sit in rows on the straw-strewn floor; the corpse very often lies on a table in the centre of the room or kitchen." About eleven o'clock at night, poteen—the poisonous watery-looking whiskey which is still manufactured secretly in some parts of Ireland—is served out to all present. At midnight the first keen over the dead is raised—the *sghread na maidne*, or morning cry, as it is called, "which no one who has heard it in Connacht is likely to forget." The keen is repeated at intervals till the burial takes place. At about three o'clock in the morning, the poteen goes round again, and

this, like the keen, is repeated at intervals till the time of burial.

The professional story-tellers used to be an indispensable feature in an Irish wake, and the old men of Connemara telling their Fenian tales are their true heirs. Story-telling, indeed, seems to be an essential part of the wake all over Ireland, but the stories in most places now are not necessarily on the old heroic themes, but are as likely to be concerned with the good deeds of the dead man or woman as with the brave and beautiful people of the legends. Songs, too, are raised from time to time, and there is occasionally a good deal of drinking, for everybody is welcome at a wake, and it is a point of honour with the relatives of the dead to show hospitality to all. Formerly, when a member of any prominent family died, people would come to the wake from all quarters, the worthless with the worthy, and occasionally these indiscriminate gatherings had the appearance of something like a debauch. It is a mistake, however, to think that a wake always degenerates into an orgy. The man who is drunk at a wake is very often a man who has been drunk, or nearly so, before he came in. Young men, knowing they are going to have a late sitting, are inclined to prepare for it by a visit to a public-house on the way. The ordinary man who assists at a wake is as sober as the ordinary man who assists at a wedding.

In some parts of the country where the wake

still survives, the sitting-up has come to be regarded as a kind of excitement for the young men. The older men do not believe in losing their sleep for it, and only turn in to pay their respects to the dead man's family for a few minutes before going to work in the morning, or at some other time.

Protestant wakes, especially, are coming more and more to be recognised as excitements for the young. Near a watering-place in the north of Ireland is an island inhabited by some Protestant farmers and their families. Recently, there was a death on the island, and many young holiday-makers from the mainland joined in the wake that followed. On the day of the funeral the coffin was brought over to the mainland on a boat, and the boats of the fishermen of the place followed it like carriages at a funeral.

It is a curious fact that wakes are not uncommon among the working people of Belfast, Protestant as well as Catholic. As often as not, the music on these occasions is of the Moody-and-Sankey order. Whiskey is served round hospitably, and one hears of a good deal of courting going on among the young people in the background.

When a man dies in an Irish countryside, all the neighbourhood unites to do him honour. In some parts of Ulster a mourning card is at once printed off, with a deep black border, and sent round the neighbours to inform them of the day

of the funeral. Before the funeral, every one flocks to the house, with its piece of crêpe on the knocker, if there is a knocker, and those who have not already seen the corpse now go into the room where it is lying and offer some remark of praise. In some of the Catholic districts of Ireland a collection is made for the priest on the day of the funeral. Writing of this with special reference to Connemara, Mr Ryan says, "These collections are curiously styled 'altars.' The P.P., or the P.P. and curate, stand near the table, and every one attending the funeral is expected to come up and contribute. This has come to be a source of considerable hardship in Connemara, especially on the very poor—to provide even a shilling is naturally a strain very often on a poor man in a Connacht nook or village, and in point of fact in order to be able to furnish the contributions the villagers and country folk have often to trudge to the towns and sell something or other. No neighbour with any respect for the departed, or the friends of the departed, will dream of staying away from the funeral, and to the collection everybody, fearing the charge of meanness, and the public opinion which is terrible and subtle in villages and country places, must be sure to contribute."

Recently, according to the same writer, a sensational incident occurred in Connemara in connection with the "altar." The wake seems to have been something of an orgy, for when the

money collected was handed to a young curate who was present he threw it down in disgust, saying in Irish that it was the price of devilry. The Parish Priest came forward and—in Irish, too, of course—told the people not to mind the curate, for he was here to-day and would be gone to-morrow, and did not understand the question. Both priest and curate ultimately went to the Archbishop with reference to the incident, and it is hinted that the Archbishop took the curate's side. It is certainly a fine thing that a number of the young clergy are trying to put an end to the "altars." I wonder, however, whether the "altars" and the poteen are so intimately related as Mr Ryan contends they are. Even in parts of the country where there is neither wake nor free drinking, these collections in the house of the dead are frequently made.

Coming to the funeral ceremony itself, one may say that customs vary in different parts of the country. In some places, the hearse is followed to the grave by men only: elsewhere women form a part of the procession. In the greater part of Ulster women stay in the house of mourning, condoling with each other, while the men are at the funeral, though among the working-classes in the towns it is common for the women to follow the coffin to the grave. In the Aran Islands, as every one who has read J. M. Synge's account of them will remember, women are an essential part of the procession. Mr Synge, describing an Aran

funeral, tells how, as the coffin, sewn loosely in sailcloth, was carried down to the graveyard, "nearly all the men, and all the oldest women, wearing petticoats over their heads, came out and joined in the procession." When they reached the graveyard, the women sat down among the flat tombstones and began keening for the dead. "Each old woman, as she took her turn in the leading recitative, seemed possessed for the moment with a profound ecstasy of grief, swaying to and fro, and bending her forehead to the stone before her, while she called out to the dead with a perpetually recurring chant of sobs. All round the graveyard other wrinkled women looking out from under the deep red petticoats that cloaked them, rocked themselves with the same rhythm, and intoned the inarticulate chant that is sustained by all as an accompaniment." This crying for the dead is not always confined to the day of the funeral. There are parts of the country in which, after Mass on a Sunday, you will see the women swaying and sobbing over their dead in the chapel graveyard as though they had lost them the day before.

It is the custom in most places for the friends of the dead to carry the coffin on their shoulders a part of the way, the hearse moving slowly in front. Sometimes, it is the rule to give every pair of bearers a turn at each end of the coffin. In Dublin, I believe, funerals going through the city are compelled by a bye-law to move at a



FARM-HOUSE IN DONEGAL.

brisk trot—a thing which startled me the first time I saw it, for in Belfast funerals move at a snail's pace through the most crowded traffic. Funerals in town generally take place in the morning, in order that business people may not be put to too great inconvenience in attending them.

I used to have something like a passion for going to funerals—not an uncommon taste in the country—and I was often struck by the philosophic way in which the poorer people seemed to accept the death of the old. I attended one country funeral where the grown-up sons of the dead man smoked their pipes steadily as they walked after the hearse. An Ulster country funeral, indeed, has an air of stoical resignation, of grim fatalism. Every farmer in the neighbourhood goes to it, or sends his car, or his polo-cart, and it is a common thing for cars that meet the procession on the road to turn and follow it. While it is going by, the driver of the car always pulls in towards the ditch, and remains there with his raised hat almost hiding his inquisitive eyes till the front part has gone past. Arrived at the grave, when the coffin has been committed to the ground, some of the young men present will occasionally take a spade and help the grave-digger to fill in the earth. I remember one day I had driven with a friend some two miles to a funeral, and after the service we were about to drive off again, when we heard a loud whistle. Looking over the wall of the graveyard, we saw a young countryman at the

graveside gesticulating and calling on us to stop, and, as we waited for him, he flung down the spade that he had been using and ran over the graves to us. He lived in the same district as ourselves, and did not fancy the idea of walking home when he could get a drive. I never saw so practical a man, so cool a disregarder of the conventions, in a graveyard before or since.

Before leaving the subject of wakes and funerals, it may be worth noting that another kind of wake is common in Ireland besides the wake of the dead. This is known as the American wake, and is held in the west in honour of those who are emigrating to America. It is a strange mixture of dancing and sudden lamentation which continues all through the night till morning. It is not without significance that so funereal a name should be given to these emigration ceremonies, for the Irish emigrant is not the personification of national adventure, but of something that has the appearance of national doom. To be in a Connemara station when emigrants are going off by the train is one of the most torturing experiences that I know. When it is a girl that is going off, she is almost carried along the platform in the arms of her male relatives, and the shrill lament that she raises as the train comes in is as terrible as though she were keening her dead. As she hangs from the railway-carriage kissing the men of her family good-bye, it seems as though they were fighting to hold her back among them, and the railway-

porters have to struggle with them as the train moves out to keep them from being dragged away. Sometimes, the lamenting girl seems to lose her grief as suddenly as she found it, and as she arrives at various railway stations she leans out of the window to see if there are any friendly faces about which will be wakened into interest by her momentary tragedy. After all, the worst tragedy of Irish emigration is not the tragedy of hopeful youth, but the tragedy of the old people who are left. The tragedy of youth occurs amid the disillusionments of the big cities of America.

I heard recently of yet a third kind of wake which took place in a town in County Tipperary. A young Protestant fell in love with a Catholic girl, and changed his religion in order to marry her. He was his mother's only son, and, when he left both her and her religion, she pulled down the blinds of the house and waked him for two nights and two days as though he were dead. And dead he is to her, for change of creed is not easily forgiven. One is sometimes told that there is no dramatic interest in the life of the people of modern Ireland, because there is so rigid a suppression of the emotions of sex. Only a person whose mind was monopolised by the sexual side of life, however, could believe this.

CHAPTER VII

PRIESTS AND PARSONS

THE Irish priest is the most difficult of all subjects for any one writing about Ireland. It is easy enough to make generalisations about him and even to believe them. But to see him fairly as a human being, to appreciate his virtues and to understand his faults and the cause of them, would involve a knowledge, an imagination, and a sense of justice such as have been united in no writer of Irish critical books that I can remember. Emphatically, I am not the person who can fill this gap of perfectness. For one thing, I was reared a Presbyterian, as they say in Ulster, and priests are not an essential part of the colour of my life as they are of the life of an Irish Catholic.

The attitude of many of the Irish people to the priests has often struck me as curious. The average intelligent Irish Catholic, so far as my experience holds, is as critical of priests as the average Protestant is of the Protestant clergy. He will tell you in conversation how this one is grasping and the other narrow to the point of bigotry, as freely as he will praise a courageous priest for his courage and a good priest for his

generosity. At the same time he has not yet succeeded in creating an atmosphere of critical opinion in the light of which the bad qualities of bad priests would gradually disappear, and the good qualities of good priests have due and intelligent honour.

Probably, the reason why in the public as opposed to the private life of the country the priests have been thus kept outside the scope of criticism is that they have already been attacked and criticised so much and so wrongheadedly by the other side. I am sure, if the Protestant clergy had been attacked by the Catholics with the same blind bitterness with which the Catholic clergy have been attacked by the Protestants, we should see the Protestants rallying around their ecclesiastical leaders with a bewildering warlike enthusiasm. If Ireland is a priest-ridden country—and it is not a priest-ridden country to anything like the degree which most people suppose—it is largely because the Irish people as a whole have not been left to work out their own salvation without interference from England, and because the Catholics of the country have not been left to work out their own salvation without interference from Protestants.

If you doubt the first of these reasons, you had better read Mr George Bernard Shaw's preface to "John Bull's Other Island." If you doubt the second, I cannot think that you have studied the kind of book which an Irish Protestant

usually reads when he sits down to learn the truth about Ireland. It is by preference a book attacking priests, and if it is written by a Catholic, or a professing Catholic—so much the better. This represents the Protestant spirit, the Protestant attitude, not at its best, but at its most usual. It is this, along with British policy, as set forth in a well-known letter of Lord Randolph Churchill, that has done more than anything else to drive the Irish Catholic publicly into the priest's arms.

I say "publicly," because, as I have already mentioned, there is almost a superfluity of private criticism of the priests among the people. The Irish temperament seems to me to show a curious combination of the satirical and the idealistic, and the priest is as likely to be a figure of mirth in a satirical phrase as he is to be idealised into a saint. The priest, it must be remembered, is not a stranger who has come down from the sacred mountains among the people; he is almost always one of the people themselves. I have no means of getting at figures about the family origin of the priests; but, from all I can hear, it would be near the truth to say that the priest is usually the son of a farmer, and that, when he is not the son of a farmer, he is usually the son of a publican. It is the Catholic farmer's summit of pride to have a son clever enough at books to be sent in for the priesthood, just as it is the Presbyterian farmer's ultimate glory

to have a son of sufficient learning to be sent on for the ministry.

Jewish parents never dedicated their children to the priesthood of God with greater pride than is sometimes felt by Catholic and Presbyterian parents in Ireland when devoting their sons to a similar service. I am sure, indeed, that in both creeds the ambitions of religious fathers, and especially of religious mothers, have thrust up into the pulpit a good many young men who were by nature intended to live on a more commonplace and human level.

One of the most generally satirised faults among priests—a fault which is a constant subject of joking all over the country—is one to which the farming classes are especially liable, and if many priests are guilty of it, this is not because they are priests, but because they are farmers' sons. Farmers in the mass, I think, are everywhere noted for their reverent tenderness for money. Sometimes they cling to money thriftily; sometimes they cling to money wastefully. In Ireland, where thrift has been so frequently discouraged by law, and where even a small sufficiency of money has about it something of a miraculous wonderfulness, the unprofitable sort of saving is the general rule. The Irish farm-born priest often brings his father's money-loving characteristics with him into his new calling. It is only fair to him to say, on the other hand, that, so far as one can hear from Catholic

witnessess, the priest usually gathers money, not for his own enrichment, but either for the glory of his church, or in order to help his parents, sisters, and brothers.

There is nothing for which the priests are more freely blamed, perhaps, than for the fees which they demand in connection with marriages. Some people talk, indeed, as though every priest in the country were a leech-like creature, who would never perform a marriage ceremony until he had drained the unfortunate bridegroom of the last possible penny. This, of course, is nonsense, and a libel on many good men. As one of the gentlest of priests said to a friend of mine some time ago, "Not only does the priest often marry poor people for nothing, but sometimes you will find him buying the ring with which he marries them." It is not long since a Munster priest made an effective protest from the pulpit against the idea that the clergy will refuse to marry a poor man unless he can give them a rich reward for it. "If any man here," he announced from the altar, "has the courage to take a woman by the hand and say in the presence of God that he wants to marry her, let him come to me and I'll marry him without any charge."

The majority of priests, of course, expect a good fee when the bridegroom is able to afford it. I heard of a rich Catholic who was married some time ago, and who after the ceremony

handed the priest ten pounds. "Are you joking?" said the priest, with a scornful look at the money. Personally, I think it is a good thing that the marriage-fee should have some relation to the means of the bride and bridegroom. On the other hand, there is no doubt that there are more than a handful of really extortionate priests scattered through the country who are a burden both to rich and poor. It is almost impossible to give any approximate idea of the extent to which extortion is practised on the occasion of marriages. Accounts vary from place to place, and most people judge all the clergy by the priest in their own neighbourhood. Add to this the fact that one bad priest gets talked about more than twenty good ones, and you will see how difficult it is to arrive at anything like a confident conclusion on the matter.

I do not know how far the figures given by a correspondent in "The Irish Nation" some time ago may be regarded as typical of Catholic Ireland. Speaking of a district in the west of Ireland, the writer declared that it is customary for the priest to demand £4 for marrying a poor man like a labourer, and £10 for a man in the position of a schoolmaster. When the bride and bridegroom belong to the farming classes, the priest, we are told, discovers the amount of the fortune which goes with the marriage, and assesses his fee accordingly. Often on occasions like this, says the same writer, a bargain is struck, and the

holy sacrament is preceded by a conversation such as : "Do it for £13, father." "No, I won't marry you under £16." "Split the difference, father." And so on, and so on. That there are priests as bad as this is unquestionable. But are they numerous? Are they in the majority? I have met too many kindly and manly-eyed priests myself to believe that this supposition can be true.¹

¹ Charles Kickham, who was sentenced to fourteen years' imprisonment for Fenianism, wrote a too little known novel, "Knocknagow," which gives an excellent picture of Irish life and customs in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Kickham, who was an earnest Catholic, expressed the view of many of the clergy and laity of his church regarding exorbitant marriage-fees in the following passage of dialogue in that novel :

"Maybe," said Maurice Kearney, "the marriage money has something to do with keeping people from getting married. Ned Brophy tells me the priest will charge twenty pounds for marrying him."

"Well," replied Father MacMahon with a laugh, "that is not so much, bearing in mind that old sauce-pan you told us of. But another parishioner of mine tells me his match is broken off altogether on account of the exorbitant demand of the priest. The father of the girl had only fifteen acres of land, and the priest wanted fifteen pounds for marrying his daughter."

"I know all about that case," said Father Hannigan. "He went against the priest at the election."

"That makes the matter worse," rejoined Father MacMahon. "Such practices will have the effect of making the people look upon the priest as a tyrant. But in the parish to which I refer, I am assured, as a rule, the farmer must pay half a year's rent to the priest for marrying his daughter."

"What do you think of the old system of public weddings?" asked Father Hannigan; "when friends and neighbours were invited, and the priest went round with a plate for his collection."

"I liked it," replied Father MacMahon. "Indeed I was looked upon as singular because I did my best to encourage the people to

I heard recently of a case of priestly extortion—though not in connection with marriages—which the priest's own parishioners may have regarded as typical, but which the action of a Bishop proved to be opposed to the decent traditions of the Church. It was the custom of this priest to make his people supply him with farm produce which he always accepted as a gift. The Bishop of the diocese got wind of the thing, I suppose, for he stopped a man who was driving a load of hay near the priest's house one day, and, after some talk, asked him where he was going with the hay. The man told him that it was to Father ——'s house. The Bishop delicately drew out the statement that Father —— had not bought the hay, but was expecting it for nothing. "Go home," he said to the man, "and take the hay back with you." "But what will Father —— say?" protested the poor man in terror, "if I don't bring him the hay after him telling me to bring it?" The Bishop ex-

keep up the old system. It made them more social and neighbourly. The priest, too, felt that what he got was given cheerfully. And besides," added Father MacMahon, laughing, "he went home with a heavier purse."

"I remember what you said at the last public wedding we had in this parish," said Mr Kearney. "'Twas at Tom Donnelly's. The collection was larger than you expected, and when you were thanking them you said no matter how small the sum might be, they could say, 'Go home now, sir, you are paid'; but that if it was a private wedding you could charge what you liked."

"I dare say some of the bridegroom's friends have often thought of my words since. But I fear we are becoming more genteel and more selfish every day; so perhaps it is as well to make people pay for their gentility."

plained that Father —— did not require the hay now, and that he himself would be responsible for what he told the man to do.

Many people will look on the extortionate Father —— as the typical priest, and will pass over the fact that the humane Bishop, who is one of the most generous of the leaders of his Church in Ireland, also belonged to the priestly order. Another comment that may be made here is that it is not in every district in Ireland that extortion such as I have mentioned could be practised. Some of the more prosperous farmers would never submit to it. In many parts, however, poverty has demoralised all the independence out of the people.

The lavish generosity which the Catholics show in supporting their priests and churches is the subject of continual amazement and respect among the better sort of Irish Protestants. I have heard Presbyterian ministers more than once wishing that they possessed the Catholic secret of persuading the people to give cheerful gifts to God, and a pious Presbyterian lady, who was commiserating the fate of misguided Catholics to me one day, wound up her lamentation with, "Well, there's one thing in which we would do well to follow their example. We'd be better Christians if we gave as generously to our Church as they do to theirs."

As may be imagined, however, there are two sides to this question. Not only are the people

very ready to give, but the Church is very ready to ask. On the other hand, it is not so ready to ask as is contended by some imaginative people who tell you that in parts of Belfast it expects contributions, not only from the Catholics themselves, but from the Protestant traders with whom the Catholics deal. I know an energetic little anti-Catholic shop-keeper who used to complain bitterly that he had to contribute to the Catholic funds. He was afraid that, if his name were not read out from the altar in the list of subscriptions, his Catholic customers would cease dealing with him. And so, with the one hand he was helping to support the Catholic Church, and with the other he was trying to undo his work by subscribing to a Presbyterian mission for the conversion of Irish Catholics to Protestantism.

In one of the biggest towns in the west of Ireland, the leading priest outdid anything suggested in Belfast in coaxing subscriptions from non-Catholics during the present year. All through Lent, when an opera-company or circus or anything of the sort came to the town, it only received "permission to perform" when an undertaking had been given that the proceeds of one evening's entertainment should be handed over to a diocesan project in which the priest was interested. One of the entertainments that arrived in the town at the time was Toft's Hobby Horses, and these had to gallop round to an even-

ing's organ-grinding on behalf of the Church. This story has appeared in print in a Dublin paper, which gives the name of the priest and the parish concerned, and, as it has not been contradicted, I take it for granted that it is true.

A good many Catholics hold that some of the financial methods of their church have, to say the least of it, gone desperately out of date. Take, for instance, the method of collecting the priest's income. In country places, two collections on behalf of the priests are held during the year—one at Easter, one in November. Each member of the church gives his contribution as he goes in at the chapel door—Catholic churches are called chapels in Ireland just as Dissenting churches are in England—and the amount is duly noted down by the priest's delegates. Ultimately, the list of the names of all the parishioners on the chapel roll is read out by the priest from the altar, and with the name of each person is read out the amount of his subscription—it may be a pound or it may be nothing. Some priests go a step further than this. They not only read out the names and the subscriptions (or the non-subscriptions), but they make comments on the amounts subscribed, flattering or the reverse, according as they think each parishioner has or has not given in fair proportion to his means. This is a cause of acute misery in some places, and, human nature being what it is, it would be strange if many country people, influenced either by vanity or by fear of the priest's

remarks, did not occasionally contribute a good deal more than their means justify.

I heard lately of a labourer in the west (whom I will call Martin Henry), who put down a shilling as his contribution, and had it returned to him by the priest's orders as insufficient. The man was very poor—perhaps, even a shilling was more than he could afford—so rather than give more he gave nothing. When the priest was reading the names out from the altar—after the pattern of “James Dwyer, five shillings ; Owen Latimer, a pound”—he paused opposite the labourer's name and uttered the words : “Martin Henry—what Davy shot in the lough—nothing.” It is said that Henry nearly took a bodily revenge on the priest after this, for they met on the road and some sharp words passed. Just as Henry seemed to be about to strike, however, the priest let him know that he had the Holy Sacrament on his person, being in fact on his way to a death-bed. To attack a priest who is carrying the Holy Sacrament is an act of sacrilege, of which no Catholic would willingly be guilty, and Henry withheld his hand for the occasion.

In some of the town districts, I believe, the priest's dues are collected by the priest himself instead of at the church doors. These regular calls of the priest in his parishioners' houses for his money impress themselves upon the minds of the people, and the result is, as it would be in any other church, a good deal of satirical gossip.

One of the priestly levies which has been

criticised a good deal is that which is made in some parts of the country on the occasion of wakes and funerals. I describe in another chapter how at times like these a plate is left in the room with the coffin so that all visitors to the house may contribute something. This custom of making a collection for the priest at funerals goes back, I believe, to the days of the Penal Laws, when the livelihood of a priest was precarious, and the generosity of the people was only too anxious to find such an expression as these occasional funeral gifts. Nowadays, when priests have assured livings, the offerings continue out of custom rather than for any other reason.

Priests seem to be divided in opinion as to whether this custom should be done away with. Not long ago a priest in the south of Ulster was asked to omit the collection for a single occasion, and refused. The wife of a comparatively prosperous man had died. The collecting-plate was duly laid beside her coffin, and every visitor to the house chinked his contribution on the plate. The husband, a sensitive man, began to feel an acute agony as the thing went on. He felt that it was offering a kind of disrespect to the dead. He went to the priest and promised to give him any sum he liked to name as the probable amount the collection would reach—a larger sum, if necessary—if only the plate were removed, and an end put to the indecent business. The priest could not see his way to grant the request. “I

must think of the precedent," he said. Here again I must repeat the warning not to judge all the Irish priests by this one. It is the less generous priests about whom most of the stories are told.

The fault most commonly imputed to Irish priests after the love of money is the love of power. In regard to this, it is probably true to say that the average priest loves power as much as the average Protestant minister in Ireland and elsewhere, and that he grasps as much of it as he can. It is a way with men in uniform, whether clerical, military, or of any other sort, all the world over. Sir Horace Plunkett's testimony in regard to the priests and the power they wield ought to give pause to those who are inclined to hasty condemnations. "I have come to the conclusion," he says, "that the immense power of the Irish Roman Catholic clergy has been singularly little abused." Of course, the immense power is in itself an abuse, but if there had been a healthy national atmosphere in the country, and a healthy national system of education, this would have given us a body of clear-thinking, independent laymen, who would have come forward to direct the public life of the country, and so have made a good deal of the social and political leadership of the priests unnecessary. This is a condition of affairs, I may say, which many of the priests themselves desire. Did not that excellent Irishman, the present Bishop of Galway, some years ago put forward as a reason for the establishment

of a Catholic University the need of an educated Catholic laity in order to do away with the power of the priests in public life, "so far as it is abnormal or unreasonable?"

The priests, indeed, are, some of them, as anti-clerical as their severest critics in the sense that they desire to see a strong and self-reliant race of men and women growing up in Ireland, and taking the destinies of the country into their hands. It must be remembered, when the Irish Bishops say reactionary things or do reactionary things—as, like all Bishops, they frequently do—that they are not necessarily representative of the best elements in the priesthood. The Bishops are appointed from Rome, sometimes in opposition to the wishes of the mass of the priests in their new diocese; and many Catholic laymen will tell you that Rome is more desirous to win the British Empire for Catholicism than to help to build up a strong and independent nation in Ireland, and that a priest too closely identified with the national movement is not likely to find himself appointed to a Bishop's see. On the other hand, I do not think that the Bishops of any church in the world are representative of the most intellectual or the most progressive of the clergy under them.

Ireland has its full share of patriotic and noble priests—priests who are not slow to come out and oppose the Bishops, when the Bishops oppose the interests of Ireland. During the present year, for instance, the Standing Committee of the Bishops

declared publicly against making Irish an essential subject for matriculation and the first year's examination in the new National University. Some of them even forbade the clergy in their dioceses to do, speak, or write anything in favour of giving the Irish language this prominence in the University curriculum. Wherever the discipline of the Church permitted them, priests have none the less been found to come forward side by side with Catholic and Protestant laymen to insist that Irish must be given its due place in the University, or that the University must get no help or sanction from the Irish people. Father O'Ciarain, P.P., for instance, told the people at Castleblayney Feis that "the Bishops of Ireland had as good a right to come into his garden and tell him to dibble his cabbage-plants head downwards as they had to tell the whole Irish nation that they would not tolerate any essential Irish in the new University." The curious feature in the situation is that many Protestant Unionists who have always been denouncing the Irish Catholics as a priest-ridden people, are doing all in their power to prevent their fellow-countrymen at the present moment from showing their independence of the Bishops in secular, as opposed to religious, affairs. The power of the Bishops is a much more real danger in Irish life than the power of the priests. The priests, as I have said, are in numberless cases on the side of the people from whom they are sprung.

"I'd be a Home Ruler, if it weren't for the priests," is a remark Protestant Unionists make to you till you are weary of it. People who talk like this do not recognise the fact that priests only wield an undue power because Ireland is not an independent country with an independent atmosphere. They do not recognise either that the Protestant Irish parson and the Catholic Irish priest have in many cases the same vices and the same virtues. You will find tyrants and bullies in both creeds, as you will find gentlemen in both creeds. You will find cultured men in both creeds, as you will find boors in both creeds. You will find misers in both creeds, as you will find patterns of generosity in both creeds. I imagine, however, that you will find a greater variety of character and temperament among the priests than among the clergy of the other churches. In all churches, of course, the Catholic Church included, the clergy pass by slow gradations from saints and heroes down to hypocrites and bullies. But it is only in the Catholic Church, I think, that you will find the merry, almost Epicurean priest and the black-browed kill-joy priest equally typical figures.

In one parish you will have a priest who is really the father of his people. He encourages the boys and girls to meet in the Gaelic League classes, and to spend a share of their evenings in dancing. He goes to see the young men hurling on Sundays, and takes an interest in the little plays which they perform with so lively a spirit. The children do

not fear him when they meet him on the roads. He is as welcome as a stranger, or as a son come home from America, in the houses of the poorest and least snobbish people. He strives to find work for his people at home, so that they need not emigrate. He trains them in habits of pleasantness as well as in habits of goodness. Such a priest is like a living soul in his parish—a light-bringer, a builder of society. I have met several priests of this high character. They are, I may note in passing, freer from religious bigotry than any other equally large body of clergy in Ireland. Perhaps, none of them has done more excellent work in putting a heart of progress and delight into his people than Father Matthew Maguire, the parish priest of Kilskeery in County Fermanagh. He has made the schools in his parish among the most efficient in Ireland. He collected a few pounds, and set on foot a lace-making industry which gives out hundreds of pounds' worth of work among the homes of his people every year. In the turning of a wrist, he has converted a district, which was nearly dead to Ireland, into a place where you will now be greeted freely in Irish by those who meet you on the road. His parish is a centre of the Home Brightening Association—a body with a somewhat sentimental name, but with a fine purpose. Only let the churches fill their pulpits with clergymen like Father Matthew Maguire, and the underflow of satire about ministers of religion will quickly lose its justification through

Ireland. Men like him—and there are many with similar aims now working in the Gaelic League—curates more often than parish priests, perhaps—are the salt, not only of their church, but of their country.

Contrasted with this kind of priest is the kill-joy, the sour Puritan. Not that I object to Puritanism. Puritanism of the sort which is not repression of joy but the attainment of joy through cleanness of mind and cultivation of decent and delightful things is one of the saving graces of Ireland. The Puritanism of many of the priests, however, does not mean the training of the young men to think honourably about women, but the training of them not to think about women at all. It means the suppression of all delights, not their reasonable cultivation. When a priest like this approaches down a lane, the boys and girls fly separate, as though even conversation between them were the beginnings of sin. He forbids the holding of Gaelic League classes unless the class for young men meets on a different evening from the class for young women. He sees only the dangerous side of dancing and none of its divine necessity. He is a prohibiter of joy; he hushes song; he preaches the flames of hell, and is a spectre of terror for children. He makes his parish a desert, and calls it the peace of God's kingdom. The Puritanical priest is sometimes a well-meaning man—even a lovable man—but the results of his pseudo-Puritanism are none the less disastrous.

Young men and women of adventurous mind and character will not remain in such a kingdom of gloom, and some of them go to America, no less to escape from the face of the priest than to escape from the face of poverty. I know a lady who organised Gaelic League classes, and had a country-side dancing and singing on her lawn on summer evenings. But the priest stepped in. He saw nothing in the whole business but the danger to the girls of walking home in the company of the young men. The lady offered to see every girl home herself with a lantern. But the priest, with his harrowing vision of the world, the flesh and the devil, did not abandon his objections, and the little flame of pleasure, which had promised brightness to a valley, flickered and became a part again of the ancient unlifting gloom.

It may not be out of place here to mention the case of a priest in a midland county who denounced the Gaelic League for holding mixed classes of boys and girls. His insults to the Gaelic Leaguers from the altar outraged the sense of decency of one of them to such a degree that he rose in the chapel during the service and challenged the truth of the priest's words. Of course, there was a great scandal. But the sympathies of all that was best in Catholic Ireland were with the Gaelic Leaguer, and the priest's "Damn the Gaelic League!" has become historic.

I hope I have made it clear that there are two sorts of priestly despotism in Ireland. One is

the natural despotism of a good and educated man among people who have been impoverished and denationalised out of a great part of their intelligence and character. The other is the unnatural despotism of men who are greedy for power and for opportunities to let other people feel it. The good priest, it must be admitted, often interferes with the conduct of his people in a way which fortunately or unfortunately no Protestants would endure from their clergy. I have heard, for instance, of a priest in an Irish part of London who went into a public-house one night and swept the glasses of drink from the counter on to the floor. I have seen a priest myself on a gala-day in an Irish country town come into a public-house, and say, "Boys, remember that any man who shows himself the worse for drink to-day is disgracing Ireland," and order the barman in front of us all not to serve any man who was not sober with drink. Many of the drinkers were indignant at the interference with their liberty, and many of them showed before evening how foolish it was to imagine them priest-ridden.

I know of a priest who went even beyond this in cutting into the liberty of his people. He arrived in the chapel one day to celebrate a marriage, but no bridegroom came. The rumour began to be whispered that the man was backing out of the marriage at the last moment. So the priest resolutely marched off to the hotel where the man was employed, and, finding him in hiding under a

billiard-table, dragged him off by main force and married him whether he would or no.

These are some trivial examples of the power which a good priest has at every turn in the lives of his people. Sometimes, from the Protestant point of view, the priestly influence is used to less excellent purpose. The Catholic theory is against mixed education, for instance, and, when a Catholic parent sends his son to a non-denominational school or college, some priest or other usually does his best to persuade the parents to take the boy away, and have him educated at a Catholic institution. In spite of these persuasions, however, there are always a number of independent Catholics who send their sons to the non-denominational schools and colleges. Even if they did not, I do not see what cause the other side has to grumble. I myself detest sectarian education heartily, but, if some people are conscientiously opposed to it, I do not see what grounds we others have for getting angry with them. There ought to be room in a decent country for all sorts of conflicting ideals.

Sometimes, unfortunately, the clergy themselves will not admit this. There have been few things more shameful in recent Irish history than the suppression by Cardinal Logue of the weekly paper called "The Irish Peasant," merely because it attacked the clerical control of Irish elementary education from an intellectual Catholic layman's point of view. Any institution, Protestant or Catholic, which ruthlessly suppresses criticism of

itself is to my mind committing slow suicide. Truth itself cannot survive in an atmosphere which is not filled with the conflict of free ideas.

I should like to end these glimpses of the priesthood with a statement of excellent things. People often tell you that the priests are to blame for half the public-houses in the country. I have heard it said in Belfast that if you see a funeral with a crowd of priests following it, it is sure to be a publican's. Now, it is probable that a great many priests, like other clergymen, have shares in drink establishments. It is likely, too, that the publican's large subscriptions often give him high importance as a parishioner. At the same time, so far as I can judge, the priests as a whole do more persistent work in the cause of temperance than any other body of clergymen in Ireland. Privately, they adhere to the old-fashioned sort of hospitality which partly consists in offering drink to their guests—a constant source of shock to critics in search of faults. The best of them, however, are tireless in urging upon their people the necessity of temperate lives.

In some parishes, they have an excellent custom of getting men to sign the teetotal pledge for a year. Many people, who would shrink from pledging their entire life-time, are quite willing to promise a year's abstinence from liquor. In one parish that I know the priest calls once every quarter upon all those who are willing to promise to abstain from drink for three months to stand

up during the chapel-service. His parish used to be intemperate. Now practically all his people stand up once a quarter at mass, and take the three-monthly pledge. I have been in his parish during the bustle and convivial excitement of a fair day, and did not see a single drunken person. It was a strange contrast to a fair I had seen in a parish at the far side of the same county. There the thing seemed more like some grotesque debauch as one saw the old men with flaming faces and the young men with wandering heads reeling in the evening to their homes.

In attempting to make generalisations to fit the Protestant and Presbyterian clergy, you will again find it difficult to say who is the typical clergyman and who the exceptional. Some of the older men are domineering, and greedily snuff up the honour paid to them by simple people. They are passionately dogmatic in their creed, and they are so busy preaching dogma that the virtues of excellent conduct in ordinary life seems to be almost forgotten by them. In other words, they are so busy looking after the Pope that they often forget their still more dangerous enemy, the Devil. Only a few years ago, a young man of unusually faultless character was refused ordination in the Presbyterian church because he would not assent to that part of the Confession of Faith which declares the Pope to be Anti-Christ. Splendid fighters, these old Presbyterians encourage their people in the virtues which they already have, but they do not frequently

enough encourage them to acquire the virtues which they have not. True, they preach temperance, and almost invariably practise it. But they have permitted Ulster to drift sexually into loose ways that are unknown in the Catholic parts of Ireland. Sabbath-breaking is in their eyes one of the deadly sins, and the cruel Sabbatarian atmosphere which they have created in Ulster is largely responsible, I think, for the revolt of many of the young men and women against all Christianity whatsoever. The fires of Hell, too, burn with somewhat sepulchral flames in the imaginations of some of the older men, and dancing, card-playing, and other neutral pleasures are to them merely the enticements of mortal sin. I know Presbyterians who could forgive a sensual error more easily than a breach of the Sabbath, though this would by no means be true of the majority of them.

As for dancing, it is not always the clergymen, sometimes it is the people themselves, who are the most tyrannous in suppressing any such expression of joy in the world. I know a young clergyman who went to a dance in the country not long ago. The elders agreed that it must not happen again, and told him so. The Presbyterian elder can be as great a tyrant as the Catholic priest. I know another clergyman who believed that a man could live in the spirit of Christ and yet play an occasional game of billiards. When a country church was thinking of asking him to become its minister, it was an elder from the town who wrote anonymous



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letters to the members, warning them of the billiard-playing habits of the young man. The old sort of elder and the old sort of minister, indeed, have between them helped to make many of the country parts of Ulster an intellectual and social desert.

The Presbyterian minister, like the priest, is often the subject of jokes among ordinary people on the ground of his love for money. When he is called from a poor congregation to a rich one, for instance, and publicly remarks that it has pleased the Lord to call him to a sphere of wider usefulness, the laity is inclined to smile. Before leaving one church for another, a minister must always receive the permission of his Presbytery to make the change. Some years ago, a minister in a provincial town was called to a church in Belfast, and he told his Presbytery of the invitation. He said that he had consulted the Lord as to what he should do, but that he found it impossible to be certain what was the Lord's will ; consequently, he would leave himself in the hands of the Presbytery, to do with as they thought best. Of course, it was taken for granted that the Presbytery would regretfully permit him to go to the larger sphere. His intimate friend, who was beside him, had already asked him before the meeting for his private wish, and the minister had conveyed to him, as he thought, that he was ready to go to Belfast ; indeed, he had already begun to make some of the arrangements for his new household. His friend was,

unluckily, rather deaf, and took the matter up in the opposite sense. He rose in the Presbytery and said that the work of their brother had been so greatly blest in his present sphere, and he had made himself so beloved by his people, that he thought they ought to ask him to continue to labour yet further in that part of the 'vineyard. The unhappy minister, hearing what was being said, distractedly caught his friend's attention, and let him know, in the vulgar saying, that he was putting his foot in it. The other showed no embarrassment, but calmly went on to say that, perhaps, on the other hand, they had no right to limit their brother's usefulness, and that, great as would be the loss to them and to their Presbytery as a result of his removal to Belfast, they must think, not of their own interests, but of the interests of the Church as a whole. After a rigmarole of this sort, he moved that the Presbytery should give their brother permission to accept the call to Belfast.

Both clergy and laity will tell you stories like this with a satirical delight. Not that the Presbyterian clergy as a whole are particularly worldly. But, like the priests, they have their share of worldly, comfortable men among them. One hears even of cases of clergymen who extract marriage fees from the people in a way comparable to that which is so generally condemned in the priests, though the sums are never comparably exorbitant. No one, however, could say that the

Presbyterian clergy are people who use their profession to make themselves rich. Their chief fault is not love of money, but a kind of pride in social power, and a narrow refusal to fight against the bigotry so common among their people. If the Presbyterian clergy had loved Ireland as much as they have hated Rome, they could have made Ulster a home of intellectual energy and spiritual buoyancy long ago. They have preferred to keep Ulster dead to fine ideas rather than risk the appearance of a few unsettling ideas among the rest. Consequently, one sees in Ulster a good deal more of hard dogma than of courageous thought and spiritual living.

The younger Presbyterian clergy, like the younger priests, are gradually coming under the influence of a new and broader spirit. There is a reaction going on against all the barren dread of Catholicism. The young men, or some of them, realise that the bogey of Popery has been standing in the path of the Church, preventing its advance towards any fair ideals. They are taking a new interest in the condition of the poor. They are paying less heed to the mere dogmas of their Church, and more to the spirit of Christ which is at the back of those dogmas. They are beginning to think of Ireland, and to see that the creation of a just and generous atmosphere in Ireland is itself a sacred work.

The clergy of the Protestant Church of Ireland have many of the faults and many of the virtues

of the Presbyterian clergy. Like these, they include many moral men, many narrow men, many tyrannical men, and a moral, narrow, tyrannical man is a danger in any community. You find some of them preaching religious fury from Orange platforms on the Twelfth of July. The majority of them, however, like the clergy of the other churches, lead comparatively unobtrusive lives, much fuller of sacrifices and unselfish gentleness than a person like myself can appreciate. I am afraid in this chapter I have dealt less than justly with the excellent aspects of the lives of Irish priests and parsons. These men, hundreds of them, have noble ideals of their own, noble passions. If their politics have been narrow, their creed hard, and their thoughts of other churches somewhat hostile and militant, it is because we in Ireland have been living in the backwash of two mingling tides of religious and political bitterness. The clergy have behaved in most circumstances with the same mixture of nobleness and ignobleness as their people. This is at once their defence and their condemnation.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ULSTERMAN'S NOTORIETY

I HAVE already denied the foolish superstition—a superstition which has vitiated politics, both Irish and English, for a century—that the Ulsterman is only a sort of foreigner in Ireland. Ireland has marked the Ulsterman for her own—marked him racially as well as geographically. If he is different from the general people of the south and west, it is not a deep division of blood and of permanent interests. It is a division of ancient religious ideals, and of a political, intellectual and economic atmosphere created for the most part by those ideals. Irish Protestant and Irish Catholic were never given a fair field upon which to fight out the battle of the Reformation. The religious issue was constantly allowed to become confused with the national issue, and, as a result of various Imperial ambitions, Ireland did not experience the unifying effects of a civil war free from foreign interference. If Ireland had enjoyed civil wars to the extent to which England has enjoyed them, she might not be more Protestant than she is, but she would certainly be more united and prosperous.

As it is, Ireland has remained a divided country.

Ulster, in spite of more than one fair promise of better things, is still a nation within a nation. Some one has said of her that she is Irish to the English and English to the Irish. This is a view, however, that takes into account only her politics, and expresses none of her deeper human characteristics. I like better the thought of the writer who summed up the Ulsterman as "a veneer of John Knox upon Rory of the Hills." This, I think, helps us more sharply than any other phrase I know to realise that, even though the Ulsterman may be cousin several times removed to the Scot, Ireland is the true mother who bore and nurtured and shaped him. The Ulsterman may be a Protestant and a Presbyterian, but at least he is an Irish Protestant and Presbyterian, not a Scotch or an English one.

The Ulsterman's religion has been at once his making and undoing. It has sent him about the world with a flame in his head, and this is a virtue or an evil just as accidents may determine. I have heard a traveller with some knowledge of South Africa declare that you might meet a man from any other part of the world out there, and might even work and live with him for a season, and at the end of the time still be ignorant whether he was a Protestant or a Catholic or nothing at all, but that you could scarcely sit down to have a drink with a man from anywhere in the Belfast end of Ulster without his immediately setting out to discover what was your religion and telling

you his own. This curiosity about the religion of other people is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the Ulsterman. Pious church-goers, blasphemers, saints, money-grubbers, loose-livers, respectables—the people of the north, with comparatively few exceptions, will not remain satisfied until they have ranged you up like an armed soldier behind either the Pope or Martin Luther.

Sometimes this is an ignoble curiosity; sometimes it is harmless and merely shows a preoccupation with religious or semi-religious things. As an instance of it, a countryman in County Derry told me one day how he had some months previously gone to Belfast to look for work, and had taken a job as tram-conductor. The first day he turned up at the stables, he declared, another worker came up to him inquisitively and said: "What peg do you hang your hat on?" My acquaintance thought himself very clever because, squaring his jaw and looking the other man determinedly in the eyes, he had answered: "On the right peg." "After that," he said, with an air as though he had still his knife in the other despite the shining fact of his own victory, "I wasn't much bothered."

This is an instance of apparently harmless curiosity, though assuredly the countryman did not think so. Unfortunately, the curiosity is not always harmless. The Ulsterman is changing fast nowadays—he is becoming more Irish and less

bigoted—but until comparatively recently it was no unusual thing in Belfast for a worker to come up to his employer and say “So-and-so’s an R.C. (Roman Catholic). I’m not going to work along with an R.C.”; and on occasions of special excitement the Catholic workers at the ship-building yards and elsewhere have had to stay away from their work till the heat of sectarian frenzy generated by some religious celebration or political crisis had died away, or at least diminished to a normal ill-humour. On such occasions there has been an almost mediæval danger abroad—to limb, if not to life—but even on many occasions, it must be confessed, to life itself. Belfast, when maddened, is as capable of a Papist-hunt, as the French Revolutionaries were of a hunt for aristocrats. I have a friend, indeed, who, whenever he had been out looking on during a Belfast riot, used to go home and read Carlyle’s “French Revolution.” He said that in movement and colour it read like a description of things in Belfast.

Religious bigotry is by no means confined to the ordinary workers in Ulster. It is also common among the foremen, the managers, and even the employers—though by no means so demoniacally common as it has been the custom to represent. I met a foreman belonging to a mill one day, who agreed with me in deploring an outburst of sectarian trouble that had just taken place in the town. He earnestly stated his belief that every

man had a right to his own religious opinions, and lamented the fact that Protestants and Catholics could not agree to live in peace together. In the course of our conversation I mentioned laughingly the way in which some Protestants talked of Catholics as though they were hopelessly dishonest and not to be trusted. The foreman's eyes filled with dark excitement.

"It's true enough," he said gravely. "I've worked with Protestant and Roman Catholic girls for fourteen years, and never made no difference between one and the other, and I know what I'm saying. I tell you this for a fact: you can go out of a room and leave a Protestant working, and while you're away, she'll work just as hard as if your eye was on her; but so much as turn your back on a Roman Catholic, and she'll drop her work like a hot brick, and devil the hand's turn will she do unless you stand over her and make her do it."

His speech had become impassioned and fanatical. I had scratched a reasonable man and found a bigot. It may be thought strange of me to put down the foreman's statements to fanaticism rather than accept them as the careful observations of a practical man. But I have seen too often how the practical Ulsterman with a flame in his head can become utterly incapable of impartial judgment. Besides, I am a practical Ulsterman myself, and I have witnessed as many disproofs of Catholic laziness as of Protestant black-heartedness.

The anti-Catholic passion is almost the first passion that an Ulster non-Catholic child knows—or was until yesterday. Fanaticism among the working classes is disappearing, but the badly educated middle class Protestants, many of whom fear that the death of fanaticism will mean the birth of Socialism, have still an abundance of the old catchwords of distrust. When I was a child, the favourite wall-scribbling in Belfast was: “NO POPE HERE.” The Catholic retort to this, which you would see chalked under it on many a red gable-end was:

“He who wrote this wrote well,
For the same is writ on the gates of Hell.”

—a couplet that, used in another connection, has been traced, I believe, to Dean Swift. The Protestants, on their side, are not without their rhymed statements of faith. It is an exceptional Protestant child who does not know the couplet:

“Up the long ladder and down the short rope,
God save King William, to Hell with the Pope.”

This cry of “To Hell with the Pope,” though in another generation it will be more silent, one hopes, than the harp on Tara’s walls, has long been the shibboleth of true blue Protestantism in Ulster. Once when I was walking with a friend on the road near Lisburn, a man in a greasy cap, like an engineer’s, came towards us on a bicycle and, just as he was passing us, he looked at our faces suddenly and, with a loud shout of “To

Hell with the Pope," pedalled off as fast as he could down the road. Evidently he had thought that we looked like Catholics, and had felt it as a duty laid on him to challenge our faith.

This is one of the humours of the religious wars in Ulster—that one's face is supposed in many quarters to betray the fact that one is a Catholic or a Protestant. I cannot say exactly what the difference between the two kinds of faces is, save that, I think, the Catholic has a deeper, more sensitive and religious eye, while the Protestant looks at once more rugged and better fed, and has an eye more accustomed to size up material things in spite of all his semi-religious idealism. The difference, however, is largely imaginary. To take my own case, for instance, my face has caused me to be taken for a Catholic quite as often as for a Protestant. I remember, when I was a boy, a friend of mine—a young Protestant Nationalist, whose proud boast it was that he had "a Papish face"—refused to let me go in his company to a Nationalist meeting in a field outside the town, because, he said, my face was a "Protestant face" and would put me in danger. Yet another friend of mine, a doughty Protestant, was going through Sandy Row, an Orange neighbourhood, one night at a time of trouble, when to his anger and amazement he was set upon as a Catholic and threatened with a beating. He, too, had the good or bad luck to have a "Papish face"—an expensive gift from the

gods. At that time it was thought in some quarters to be a sign of Papistry if one went about clean-shaven. True-blue Protestants wore moustaches—a Catholic with a red moustache, indeed, was unthinkable. My friend had been foolish enough to shave his upper lip. He would have paid the penalty, if his anger had not roused him to a pitch of denunciatory eloquence that at once convinced and humiliated his assailants.

It would be wrong to infer from all this that there is no such thing as friendly intercourse between Protestants and Catholics. In Belfast and the towns an ancient, easily-fired feud, as between Montagu and Capulet, is the rule, but even here friendship between people of opposing religions is by no means so uncommon as is often supposed. At the same time, the Catholic who mixes freely in Protestant society, and vice versa, is an exceptional person. He is, as a rule, exceedingly popular—partly because of his obvious broad-mindedness, partly because he is looked on as something of a miracle. There are many Protestant houses, on the other hand, in which the appearance of a Catholic, however broad-minded he may be, would be as unacceptable as the appearance of the devil. These are, I imagine, mostly the houses of people who know Catholics only through “Foxye’s Book of Martyrs” and literature of that sort, and have never had occasion to mix with them and talk with them as flesh-and-blood human beings. If the children in houses like these make Catholic

friends at school, they do not feel like bringing the latter home and introducing them to their families. They cannot trust their parents to behave themselves in such unfamiliar circumstances.

Probably the father of the house, who himself subscribes to a mission for proselytising among the Catholics of the south and west, would honestly look on any Catholic companion of his son's as a deeply designing agent of the Jesuits, whose single thought in life was how most speedily and effectively to smash the Protestant religion to pieces. The presence of so dangerous a conspirator at the tea-table—full armed with Jesuit wiles even at the age of twelve—would produce an atmosphere of restraint and frowns. After the unwelcome guest had gone, the son of the house would be turned upon by an indignant father and warned not to repeat his outrage on the sanctity of a Protestant home.

I do not say that the average Protestant home is so exclusive as this, though I think that, when it is not, it is the result of indifference more often than of liberal ideas. The extreme sort of exclusiveness, however, is more common among the middle-classes than among the workers—much more common in the towns than in the country. Let a Protestant girl in Belfast have a Catholic friend of the opposite sex, and immediately there is a hubbub among her family friends and church acquaintances as though the world was in danger of coming to an end. The majority of Protestant

parents would, so far as I have observed, rather see their children married to atheists than to Catholics. This, fortunately, does not prevent an occasional young man and woman of opposite religions from having the courage to marry. In cases of this sort, the woman commonly takes the religion of her husband, though sometimes both husband and wife remain faithful to their own churches. On the whole, I think mixed marriages show as high an average of happiness as any other. They are dangerous experiments, however, among people who believe that those of an opposite religion to their own are doomed to everlasting punishment.

Probably I have said enough to show the extent to which religious bitterness prevails in Ulster. It may be no harm, however, to mention one aspect of this bitterness which is not without its paradoxical and amusing side. Nothing makes an Ulster Protestant more indignant than the treatment which is said to be meted out to a Southern Catholic who changes, or desires to change, his religion. It never seems to strike that Protestant that, were he himself to propose to change his religion, his fellow-Protestants would treat him in exactly the same way. I knew a young man some years ago who gradually became converted—or, if you like the word better, perverted—to Catholicism. One day, after the news of the conversion was published, he met in the street the two sisters of one of his most intimate friends. He was about to greet them in the old friendly, cheerful way,

raising his hat and eager to shake hands. They stared at him, however, as though they had never seen him before. They were educated and—if I may use a silly word—fashionable girls, but they were still sufficiently sturdy in their Protestantism to cut a man who turned his back—or his coat—on the Protestant religion.

In the country and among the poorer people, as I have said, a healthier spirit rules. Here, too, it must be admitted, the ancient bigotries are alive, and stories pass from grandmother to grandchild of the wickedness and greed of priests, and of the wiles of nuns, and memories of the fires of the persecutor, and of the reputed massacre of Protestants in 1641, and of the '98 incident of Scullabogue barn, are stuff of which much light conversation is made. An Orangeman, sitting over the fire with you, will roll you off a long list of Catholic crimes, and open out for you a field of blood-stained lore with such earnestness and imagination that, if not convinced, you are at least overwhelmed.

“There was only one man that ever knowed how to treat them,” said an Orange farmer to me one night of the Catholic Irish; “and that was Cromwell. He never let them get their head up. It’s the only way.”

This sounds as bad as anything you could find among the middle-classes of Belfast, so that some people will be all the more surprised to hear that the farmer, who spoke in such a manner, lived on

the easiest and even most warm-hearted terms with his Catholic neighbours.

“Do you think I don’t like Roman Catholics?” he cried one day when I was putting up a case for them. “I tell you I’d sooner have a Roman Catholic than a Protestant any day. All my best friends are Roman Catholics. Sure, Willie ——” (naming a Catholic neighbour) “and me is never separate.”

Upon this I cornered him, and asked him if he honestly thought Willie —— was a terrible fellow, who would cheat him and lie to him and cut his throat in a moment of religious excitement.

The Orangeman’s face screwed up in bitterness, and he looked at me from wrinkled eyes. “Ay,” he declared in a kind of sour passion, “he would cheat me and lie to me and cut my throat or anything else for the sake of his religion, and,” he added surprisingly, “I don’t blame him either. A Roman Catholic is a Roman Catholic first and your friend afterwards, and he’ll do whatever his priest tells him. The priest tells him it isn’t a sin to tell lies and murder for the sake of the Church, and that he’ll go to Hell if he doesn’t do as they bid. I tell you if the Roman Catholics had the upper hand there wouldn’t be many Protestants left in Ireland. And,” he wound up, with a knowing look, “Willie —— would have to do as he was bid, the same as the rest of them.”

The reality of the friendship which existed between the ultra-Orange farmer and his Catholic

friend Willie was made manifest on a critical occasion during the last Boer War. For some reason or other, a rumour arose in their part of the country during the early days of the war that a great Catholic rising was to take place, and that farmers might expect to have English troops billeted on them at any moment for the protection of the defenceless Protestant majority. Some faces were white at the market at which the story was spread, and not the least white was our friend the Orange farmer's—a pardonable whiteness, seeing that throat-cutting and burning at the stake were the gentlest of deaths to the possibility of which he and his family might now look forward. While he was digesting the first terrors of the news, his friend, Willie, appeared along the street, and the Orangeman went up to him with troubled eyes, and told him the worst.

“And I’m saying, Willie,” he broke out, with a sudden tearful earnestness, when his story was told, “if it comes to war in the end, and you and me finds ourselves on opposite sides on the field of battle, I swear to God that I’ll shoot over your head, and you must shoot over mine, for, man dear, I’d be loath to kill you.”

Thus was made a new pact of friendship—a pact that has its comic side, but that has still about it something of beauty, and that helps to show the foolishness of those who speak as though the estranging sea between Irish Catholic and Protestant were an eternal work of God, and not a

removable bitterness created by politicians and journalists.

The tendency of Protestant and Catholic in Ulster for some time past has been to unite, and if the clergy and the journalists wished for this unity, the atmosphere of Ulster could be cleared in less than a generation. The Press, however, is in the hands, not of idealists, but of heated politicians, and the same thing holds true to a great extent of the pulpit. Protestants are more likely to be warned in their churches against errors of Catholic doctrine than against errors of Protestant conduct towards Catholics in a misbehaving world. Similarly, if any trouble arises between Catholics and Protestants in the streets, the Unionist Press, instead of commenting upon the case on its merits, denounces it at once as a Nationalist or Catholic outrage, while the Nationalist Press, with equal readiness, represents the same incident as an unprovoked Orange assault on unoffending Catholics. Thus innocent and well-meaning people, who only read papers containing their own views, learn to look on their opponents as a kind of savages, lying in wait for the seed of the righteous with stones, rivets, and bad language.

The truth of the matter is, of course, that Ulster Protestants and Ulster Catholics are, to use an expressive phrase, very much of a muchness. There are broad-minded Protestants and broad-minded Catholics, bigoted Protestants and bigoted Catholics. There are cruel Protestants and cruel

Catholics, gentle Protestants and gentle Catholics. There are Protestants who would like to see all the Catholics swept out of the country, and Catholics who would like to see Protestants swept out of the country ; but, to match them, there are Protestants who want to live in peace and friendship with their Catholic neighbours, and Catholics who want to live in peace and friendship with their Protestant neighbours. For every bigot or black sheep you find on one side, you will, as an English commentator on Ireland would say, find two on the other. Protestant and Catholic have been looking at each other more closely and honestly of late, and have each been amazed to discover how human the other is. There may never have been a more bitter sort of bigotry in Ulster than at the present moment, but, on the other hand, never was so fine and general a spirit of broad-mindedness to be found. Middle-aged—or rather century-old—bigotry is uttering its last cry, and it is a loud and strident cry, so loud indeed that many people are unable to hear beyond it the more pleasant and gathering voices of the peace-bringers.

The youth of Ulster are coming to see more and more clearly that the fears of their fathers, while they may have had an intelligible enough origin, are now absurd. Catholics have been mixing more freely with the Protestants during the last few years in the schools and colleges than they used to do. This, too, despite the frequent protests of the

Catholic Bishops and clergy—protests which afford the old kind of Protestant a sort of bitter satisfaction, because he imagines they justify him in his vigorous faith. On the whole, however, it is doubtful whether sectarian bigotry is very much more common in Ulster than in England. English Anglicans and Catholics and Nonconformists make a sufficiently loud noise about having to send their children to schools of which they do not approve, and I have heard as spitefully narrow things said in England against Nonconformists as I ever heard said in Ulster against Catholics. In Ulster sectarian hatred is at least a passion: in England, so far as I have been able to see, it is a pettiness. I once asked an Englishman whether he got his newspapers in a certain shop. He said that he did not, because he “did not believe in encouraging those damned Nonconformists.” I believe his spirit is a good deal commoner in the country parts of England than is sometimes realised. There was a Scotch lady, for instance, who took over a school in an English country-town some time ago, and who, in order to further her interests, ceased to be a professing Presbyterian and became a member of the local Anglican Church. The Vicar sent his children to her school, till one day it became known that she was an escaped Dissenter, whereupon he immediately withdrew his children from the care of a teacher with so dubious a past.

I mention these facts merely to show that it is foolish to represent, as some people do,





the war of creeds in Ulster and throughout Ireland as an unparalleled phenomenon, branding the people as a sort of religious hooligans who would produce a kind of blend of the Cromwellian massacres and St Bartholomew's Day were it not for the watchful care of a humane British Government. The Irish in Ulster, as in the other provinces, would get on excellently, if they were only left to themselves. At the time of the recent Belfast dockers' strike this tendency to union was clearly seen. Mr Joseph Devlin, the Nationalist M.P., and Councillor Boyd, the Orange Trade Unionist, followed each other on the same platform and pronounced sectarian bigotry among the Belfast working men dead. And dead, or on the way to death, it afterwards proved to be, for when the riots broke out—in which two lives were lost—they took the form of fights between the people and the soldiers, never between the Catholics and the Protestants.¹

Every one who knows Belfast and the curious way in which Catholics and Protestants to a large extent inhabit different districts, communicating with each other through numerous short streets—streets which are a temptation of the evil one to raiders and stone-throwers—will realise the significance of this fact. A few years ago

¹ The Press made a great deal of the Belfast riots on the last twelfth of July. These riots, however, were between the Nationalists and the police, not between the Catholics and the Orangemen. They did not signify an outbreak of the old religious bigotry.

an anti-military riot in the Falls Road—the Catholic quarter of the city—would have been the signal for a hosting of the Protestant forces on the Shankhill Road and in Sandy Row. Many of the enemies of the strikers, failing to recognise the strength and the extent of the new spirit, believed that such a riot had only to be precipitated a couple of years ago to kindle the old fires of hatred and leave the Protestant and Catholic workers divided as before. As things turned out on this occasion, more than one fiery Protestant was to be found fighting doughtily side by side with the Catholic rioters. A friend of mine who was through the riots told me that, at one time, some stones came down on the rioters through a side street from a group of Orange boys, but that, instead of replying to them in the same way, the Catholic fighters cried to each other: “Don’t throw back. We have no quarrel with the Orangemen. It’s the soldiers we’re fighting.”

Indeed, I saw something of the same spirit in action myself on the night after the riot, when I walked through the disturbed quarter. Not the men of the Shankhill Road as a whole, but a few boys incited by a firebrand whom the Orangemen do not take very seriously, were shouting an occasional song of defiance and hurling now and then an angry stone down the gloom of a connecting street into the Catholic district. It was easy to see that, the soldiers

having been hurriedly withdrawn, the rank and file of the people were becoming a little irritated by these small but persistent attacks from a new source. It is to their credit, however, that they stood there in the darkness and endured challenge and attacks without an effort at retort, clergymen, politicians and industrial leaders being tireless with their wise and charitable counsels. Indeed, one of the most irresistible peace-makers on this occasion was a man who, I knew for certain, had been among the most impetuous of the stone-slingers twenty-four hours previously. He had a strong belief in fighting the English whenever and wherever possible, but he did not believe in Irishmen fighting each other.

It is, of course, as yet scarcely possible to test the depth and extent of the new spirit at the ballot-boxes. It is a spirit which is affecting the youth of the province, largely without votes and without organisation, rather than the old and the middle-aged who have still control of the political machine. The greater part of the latter will never realise the folly of their bigotry until they awake in Paradise. Youth, however, ardent, courageous, determined, is beginning to think new thoughts and to make for itself new ideals, social, national, and spiritual. It is only fair to say that the credit of the new—or the coming—order of things is largely due to men like Mr Lindsay Crawford, who broke away from the old sort of Orangeism to tell

his fellow-Protestants that no Irish politics could be honourably based on any consideration that did not include the passionate love of Ireland, and to Parliamentary Nationalists of the younger generation, like Mr Joseph Devlin and Mr T. M. Kettle, who have fought election-battles in the new faith of the union of Orange and Green. I do not hold the same political creed as Mr Devlin—indeed, he has had little but what was disparaging to say of the school of politics which I follow—but every one must recognise that, in spite of his association with a rather sectarian society like the Hibernians, he has persistently set his face against religious bigotry through his public career. Mr Thomas Sloan, the Independent Orange M.P., might send down a noble name to history as a worker for the same end, for he has a strong and ardent following. The question that troubles many people is, Has he the courage of soul—no one doubts his physical courage—to choose the difficult way of patriotism rather than the readier way of relying upon old catchwords and hatreds? Some of the younger Presbyterian ministers are beginning to respond to the new influences, just as are some of the younger Catholic priests, and both among the clergy and the laity of the Presbyterian Church growing murmurs are to be heard against the official Church collection of money for the proselytisation of Irish Catholics. I met a Presbyterian of some weight the other day who refuses to put even a penny

in the plate on the day on which this collection is made.

Nor are the members of the disestablished Protestant Church remaining aloof from the new patriotic movement towards unity. One of the sanest and most charitable influences in his own sphere in Ireland to-day is the witty and brilliant Protestant Episcopal clergyman, who writes novels under the pseudonym of George A. Birmingham.

CHAPTER IX

THE IRISH GENTRY

IN Ireland, according to a character of Mr Shaw's, there is only one class distinction : either you are a gentleman or you are not. Mr Shaw—or his character—is not quite right. The landed gentry give us a sort of upper class, as the professions and the shop-keepers give us a sort of middle class, in Ireland. The Irish upper class, however, plays a smaller part in the social and progressive life of the nation than the upper class in almost any other country in the world. Irish gentlemen as individuals are among the ballad-glorious heroes of the nation : the Irish gentry as a class are, from Ireland's point of view, one of the most worthless aristocracies in history.

The ordinary Irish gentleman who can afford to do so lives largely out of Ireland. As a boy, he goes to an English school : as a young man he plays at an English University, or becomes an officer in the English army. When he is at home he lives as completely aloof from his people as though he were a foreigner treading conquered ground. His estate is not a thing in which he takes any interest apart from the tribute which

he can exact from it. The people do not see him at their churches; they do not find him on their platforms at political meetings; he does not even lend his presence to their festivals of song and language revival, their Feiseanna—those delightful recreators of the social life of Ireland. Behind the rent-collecting agent and the rent-defending policeman he stands, a hostile force, believing in no justice save the justice which gives him as much money as he can get for his land, believing in no liberty save the liberty to leave his country a little poorer than he found it, and to subject the interests of an entire people to his own. His relations with his tenants have no sanction of human feeling. He never helped to build a house or an out-house on one of his farms; his presence never encouraged a farmer to drain a field, but rather to leave it undrained; to build a wall, but rather to leave it unbuilt. People still tell how he once forbade even the erection of cottages for labourers on the farms on his estate. Remembering that death, old age, and other accidents have a way of suddenly plunging labourers' families into pauperism, he looked on labourers as mere potential burdens on the poor rate which came so largely out of his own pocket. His "crowbar brigade"—the band of hired men who went round his estate with their crowbars and levelled cottage after cottage to the ground—is one of the picturesque evil memories of Irish nineteenth-century history.

Apart from his treatment of his country and his tenants, the Irish landlord ought not to be looked upon as a monster of the vices. "Is he a good landlord?" a friend of mine asked an old man going up Croaghpatrick one day about a gentleman in the neighbourhood. "I have never heard tell of a good landlord," the countryman replied with a kind of humour; "it's a bad trade." Whatever the evils of his trade may be, however, it cannot be denied that the landlord is a vital and courageous figure, as the record of himself and his sons as soldiers in the British army bears witness; and if he has been unscrupulous in his dealings with his tenants, it is because Ireland has for long been really in a state of war, and he looked on those who challenged him as his enemies not merely in person but in principle. He could work himself into a moral hatred of them as the enemies of religious liberty, of social order, of the English throne, of everything he honours in his conventional phrases. His imagination could not grasp the point of view of the other side. To him it simply meant anarchy and uncleanness. It meant, too, it must be remembered, the overthrow of his sons' chances in the world and of the security of his daughters' social well-being. He fought as cruelly as men always fight for their families.

Ireland has lost much by the absence of her aristocrats from her councils and from the centres of her national life. She has lost the

help of hundreds of men, unsurpassed as fighters, with high gifts of organisation and leadership, unbending in truthfulness, passionately honourable men as honour is generally understood among aristocracies. It is a question, however, if the Irish gentry have not lost still more. They have lived in a little narrow world of bitterness, when they might have been a part of a large and joyous struggle towards the making of a civilisation. They have experienced all the pleasures of hunting and shooting, of eating and drinking, of comfort and the company of handsome men and women, but they are like people who go through one of the wonderful places of the world in a closed carriage with the blinds pulled down. They do not know the music of the hills and the lakes among which they live, or the stories, or the histories. They might have been the leaders of a nation : they are no better than tourists in their own country, and, unlike tourists, they are not an expending but an expensive institution. Mr Standish O'Grady has pronounced their epitaph in one of the most impressive passages I know in contemporary literature. "Aristocracies," he has written, "come and go like the waves of the sea ; and some fall nobly and others ignobly. As I write, this Protestant Anglo-Irish aristocracy, which once owned all Ireland from the centre to the sea, is rotting from the land in the most dismal farce-tragedy of all time, without one brave deed, without one brave word.

“Our last Irish aristocracy was Catholic, intensely and fanatically Royalist and Cavalier, and compounded of elements which were Norman-Irish and Milesian-Irish. They worshipped the Crown when the Crown had become a phantom or a ghost, and the god whom they worshipped was not able to save them or himself. They were defeated and exterminated. They lost everything, but they did not lose honour; and because they did not lose that, their overthrow was bewailed in songs and music which will not cease to sound for centuries yet.

“ ‘Shawn O’Dwyer a Glanna,
We’re worsted in the game.’

“Worst they were; for they made a fatal mistake, and they had to go; but they brought their honour with them, and they founded noble and princely families on the Continent.

“Who laments the destruction of our present Anglo-Irish aristocracy? Perhaps in broad Ireland not one. They fall from the land while innumerable eyes are dry, and their fall will not be bewailed in one piteous dirge or one mournful melody.”

The landlord is passing now with a swifter sureness than ever, as a result of Mr Wyndham’s Land Act, and, save in those cases where he is meeting new facts with a new attitude, he is becoming more and more an isolated figure, living behind high walls and iron gates. The richer ones cross

to England, except for the shooting and hunting seasons, but the poorer ones live on in their old homes like a kind of first-class misdemeanants, for their homes must have grown something of a prison to them. They have no national culture—very little of any sort of culture, indeed—and those of them who have intellect must find their surroundings at times almost insupportable.

One hears a good deal about the gay and rollicking Irish gentleman, but I do not think the Irish gentleman is now half so gay or half so rollicking as he was towards the end of the eighteenth century, when it is said he used to mix with the boys of the countryside on the hurling-field. To the older sort of landlord, indeed, Ireland must now be one broad valley of bitterness and humiliation. There is a titled landlord in the south, who in the old days used to keep his tenants standing bareheaded for hours in the rain on days on which they came to pay their rents. He put them even to the indignity of taking off their boots before he would allow them to come into his rent-office. Lately, he entered into negotiations with them with regard to the sale of his land, and made an appointment for a conference with them in a hotel in a neighbouring market-town. On the appointed day, the tenants held a preliminary meeting in the hotel to discuss what terms they should offer, and while the meeting was in progress the landlord arrived, and sent in word that he was ready. The chairman of the meeting sent back a message

that if Lord So-and-so would call back in about three-quarters-of-an-hour they would be prepared to receive him. That scene, even if you have not much imagination, will enable you to realise the measure of the revolution that is changing the face and the character of Ireland.

Far as the Irish gentry have lived out of the main stream of the national life, however, Ireland has given them a definitely Irish character in more ways than one. Irish gentry are different from the gentry of other countries. No one could have mistaken Colonel Saunderson for anything but an Irishman, and Lord Charles Beresford has characteristics as essentially Irish as though he had been a Nationalist from his birth. Colonel Saunderson had the traditional high spirits of his class, and his instinct for practical joking went so far that once, when some English guests came to visit him at his home, he drove them from the railway-station to the house at a breakneck gallop on a jaunting-car, and had pigs running about the house when he arrived, so that they might not be disappointed in any of their prejudices. It may have been a Lever-and-Lover kind of humour, but Lever and Lover, exaggerated as many of their pages are, reflected at least one side of the Irish character—its exuberance, its recklessness, its hospitality.

I think myself that the Irish gentleman sometimes assumes this recklessness and exuberance to a degree far beyond what is natural to him. Going to England, he finds that a certain conception of



GALWAY FISH-MARKET.

the Irish character exists among the English people, and that he can make himself popular with the help of a few extravagant tricks and stories. Accordingly, he begins to behave as he never behaved in Ireland, and sometimes even puts a dash of brogue into his speech which had never been noticeable before. Luckily the "stage Irishman" has been discredited of late years, and so the real Irishman no longer finds it desirable to make caricatures of himself for the amusement of strangers.

George Meredith had evidently met the "stage Irishman" before he invented the character of Mr Sullivan Smith in "Diana of the Crossways." "There are Irishmen and Irishmen," declares the wise Redworth in a comment on Mr Sullivan Smith. "I've met cool heads and long heads among them, and you and I knew Jack Derry, who was good at most things. But the burlesque Irishman can't be caricatured. Nature strained herself in a fit of absurdity to produce him, and all that Art can do is to copy." The absurdity of the "stage Irishman," however, is not always the work of Nature. It is often, as I have suggested, a characteristic acquired by assiduous labour, like a knowledge of Latin or ease in dancing. It is as frequently conscious as it is unconscious. It is an abuse of the racial comic and dramatic instinct which gave so many fine comic playwrights to English literature—Sheridan, Oscar Wilde, and Mr Bernard Shaw, to name no others. Where it is unconscious, it is an expression of denationalisation, like the English

writing of a Babu. Ireland trying to express itself in the English way is bound to have its ridiculous and grotesque side, just as India trying to express itself in an English way is bound to have its grotesque and ridiculous side. It may be argued that the Irish gentleman—I use the word in the technical sense all through this chapter—is usually a colonist from England, and that therefore this rule does not apply to him. Every one knows, on the other hand, that no family, English or otherwise, can live even for a single generation in Ireland without becoming in some degree Irish. England vainly passed laws again and again to prevent the colonists from becoming Irishised. The tragedy of the landlords, like the tragedy of the people of Ulster, is that they could not be altogether English, and would not be altogether Irish.

The Irish gentleman, now that the land war has lost its indecisiveness, and, with that, much of its bitterness, is changing. In many parts of the country we see him making advances towards the people, attempting to get at their point of view, to help them in the reconstruction of the social life, the industrial life, the intellectual life of the country. All intelligent Irishmen know of the splendid work done in Kilkenny by Captain Otway Cuffe, brother of the Earl of Desart. Kilkenny has now a woollen mill, a furniture industry, and a little national theatre, and Captain Cuffe has lately been standing on Gaelic League platforms, speaking in support of essential Irish in

the National University. Lord Dunraven has definitely made his confession of faith in nationality, and Lord Monteagle has helped in the building of the new Ireland around his own home. Lord Castletown passionately advocates the revival of the Irish language, and Captain Shawe-Taylor is only one of many of his class who have taken part in the present reawakening of the national self-consciousness. The Protestant Bishop of Clogher has urged the people of his church to establish a kind of Protestant Gaelic League. Colonel Everard has planted the tobacco-growing industry in Ireland. Elsewhere we have a country gentleman thinking out the railway problem from the national point of view, and Mr Archibald Dobbs, a descendant of the famous industrial Dobbs of the Irish Parliament of the eighteenth century, has been working at a scheme of proportional representation, so that minorities in Ireland may have no fear of being overwhelmed. Over the country there are a hundred signs that the Irish gentry are taking a vital interest in their country, such as they have not taken since the days of Grattan and Lord Charlemont and Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Only the other day, Lord Iveagh's paper, "The Outlook," spoke in admiration of the industrial side of the Sinn Féin policy, and we may presume that Lord Iveagh himself would stand by this statement of opinion. Sir Horace Plunkett's co-operative movement has had numerous and enthusiastic supporters among the landed gentry and

the industrial leaders of the country; and Sir Horace Plunkett's movement, philosophically considered, is only a part of the general nation-building effort which is every day finding new expressions, new outlets, in all manner of people and all manner of places.

I do not think then that the Irish aristocracy is going to perish without hope of a blessed resurrection. The Irish landlord has sinned against Ireland as the Irish farmer has, as the Irish priest has, as the Irish Protestant has, as the Irish industrialist has—all of them in different ways, and in different degrees. We see at the present moment the beginnings, as it were, of a great act of national repentance, in which Irish men and women of all creeds and classes are taking part. We are as yet only in the first day of things. Misunderstandings, bigotries, still fill the air with their echoes, and make the condition of the country seem much more desperate than it is. Hopes, however, are continually challenging and defeating fears.

I find I have left out of account in this chapter the Irish woman of the aristocratic classes. This is unfair, because for every man in those classes who is now taking an effective interest in Ireland you will probably find two women doing the same thing. Irish clothes, Irish music, Irish dancing, are beginning to have even a fashionable reputation. Many of these ladies, of course, were never regardless of the people around them, and the

people have spoken kindly of them in return. The bad landlord was a fact, and politicians made it appear as though he were the only fact in Irish landlordism. But there have always been exceptions to the rule of badness, and the more human and generous side of the landed class is now constantly asserting itself—asserting itself through the energies of the women, I think, more usually even than among the men. The people, I believe, will not long harbour their old grudges, if they are approached in the spirit of friendship and not of patronage. “Ah, why would we speak ill of them? Bad luck follows them,” said an old countryman lately, speaking about the landlords of his part of the country. That is not an uncommon attitude among the people. They have no desire to see their ancient enemies thrust from their mansions and their woods. They neither hate lords nor love them so much as is generally and contradictorily supposed.

CHAPTER X

TOWN LIFE, WITH A NOTE ON PUBLIC LIFE

SOME of the Irish towns are the plainest—I will not say the ugliest—you could desire. At the head of the towns, however, stand a number of cities of distinguished beauty — Dublin and Limerick and Galway, to name no others. Dublin with its wide central street, its statues and its time-darkened buildings, has a dignity such as one associates with some of the southern towns in the United States—a dignity of memories and of manners. Its squares, its railed-in areas, its flights of steps, its tall houses of brick richly-coloured as wine, give it the air of a splendid relic of the eighteenth century.¹ It is unforgettably a capital.

¹ The first volume of an interesting book about Dublin has lately been published by the Georgian Society. Its object is to leave a permanent record of the beautiful houses decorated during Ireland's luxurious period—1782-1800. It is mainly made up of reproductions of carvings in plaster, wood and stone, which, as examples of pseudo-classic art, are unequalled, and in addition it contains a note giving the names of the occupiers in the more important streets from 1798 to the present day. Many of these fine and polished homes are now among the worst tenements in the city, and are being dismantled and their treasures sold in England. Others have long been the headquarters of professional men, and Irishmen of taste have begun to regard them as possessions to be coveted.

Soldiers appear and reappear like monotonous red toys, under the shadow of the low classic temple that is now the Bank of Ireland, but that once was the Irish Parliament House. It is as though they were there in temporary occupation : the Parliament House has an air of permanency, of solemn patience, that makes them look like impudent unrealities. Opposite to it stands Trinity College with its dingy walls—fortress in chief of the strong masterful colonists, against which wave upon wave of the national desire has beaten and broken, leaving its tide-marks as upon an old rock. Dublin, indeed, is a kind of ambiguous capital, the capital partly of a colony, partly of a nation ; it never decided which. It is not without significance that the far-famed Dublin Castle is not much more noticeable in the scheme of the city than a shop in a back street. The Dublin that impresses itself upon the eye and the imagination is the Dublin of the Parliament House and Trinity College, the Dublin of the Anglo-Irish colony and the Irish nation struggling through centuries to its birth.

Belfast, with its industrial clamour, its new red brick that screams at you, and its electric trams that fly faster than the trams anywhere else, represents by comparison the rush of the nineteenth century into Ireland. It is the nineteenth-century in youth, however, not in decadence. Belfast has made itself hastily, too hastily, and when it lies silent through the fear of God on the morning of the seventh day, you see that it is as yet an in-

dustrial camp and not a city. . . . It will be pulled down one of these days, and built afresh by people who love it too well to leave it like a jumble of jerry-building in a field. It has too many of the elements of beauty both in its situation and in its people to remain permanently a discord in the side of Ulster. Spread beneath its hills and along the low shores of its windy lough, it has a bustling population of men who are at once militant and emotional, and of women with a high average of determination and good looks. It seems to me indeed to lack only one thing in order to be a great city: it lacks that healthy nationality which is synonymous with taste. Its people have a promising gladness in spite of the gloom of its conflicting churches. They are idealists, for they would drop all their worldly interests any day to fight, some of them for a green flag, some of them for an orange banner. I do not mean that the town is not full of quiet people who would not fight for any cause whatsoever. What gives Belfast its distinction among cities, however, is the strain of almost savage idealism that runs in the veins of the people. I call the idealism savage, because it has never been given a soul by the churches, or an intellect by the schools and colleges. Belfast has grown up like a child whose parents died in its infancy, and the jerry-builders and the catchword orators have taken merciless advantage of it.

Limerick is in some ways like a miniature

Dublin. Just as in Dublin the main thoroughfare is called O'Connell Street by the Irish and Sackville Street by other people, so in Limerick the main thoroughfare is called O'Connell Street by the Irish and George Street by everybody else. In both cities you can almost tell a man's politics by the way in which he names these streets.¹ As regards the appearance of Limerick, Thackeray, in his rather useless book on Ireland, declares that at first sight you are "half led to believe that you are arrived in a second Liverpool, so tall are the warehouses and broad the quays : so neat and trim a street of near a mile which stretches before you." It is, as he saw, an idle Liverpool, however. Its quiet warehouses and its deserted quay-sides give you the sensations you might feel if you had come suddenly upon the forgotten palace of some Sleeping Beauty. Looking over the bridge by the ruined castle in the evening, you see a river of lights as wonderful as the Thames between Westminster Bridge and St Paul's after nightfall, but it is the Thames of a distant enchanted country—the Thames seen in an exquisite revealing mirage. In the day-time O'Connell Street is filled with fine-

¹ This is much less the case in Limerick than in Dublin. O'Connell Bridge in Dublin used to be called Carlisle Bridge, and loyalists fought for the old name as though it were a symbol of their religious faith. One loyal gentleman used, whenever he was driving across the Bridge, to ask the carman in an innocent tone what it was called. If the carman answered, as he usually did, "O'Connell Bridge, sir," the fare would say, as if driving home a needed lesson in loyalty, "Humph, if you had said 'Carlisle Bridge,' I would have given you another sixpence !"

looking people who know how to dress, going leisurely about in carriages, in motor-cars, and on foot, and jaunting-cars wait idly at the street-corners for their fares. Limerick has its own fashion and its own elegance. It belongs to a civilisation before trams were invented or tea-shops thought of. It is the stateliest city of its size I know, and built upon the stateliest river.

Galway is more essentially a city in ruins than any I have ever beheld. It is a grey city, a city of noble walls and narrow streets, with the winds of the sea blowing into its mouth and reminding it ever of the days when it sent forth its merchant ships into deep waters, and Spanish captains brought their wares to its quays. Galway has no main street of fashion and elegance. Its warehouses, its ruinous mills, give it the appearance of a city that has been shelled and sacked by an invader. These warehouses and mills were built on a palatial scale, and even in ruin they are noble : by moonlight they have a marble grandeur. A sleepy horse-tram with its sleepy bell winds along one of the streets, as though apologising for its almost modern intrusiveness. The Claddagh village by the harbour, with its coloured cottages under their grotesque depths of thatch and its fishing population in their jerseys and shawls, helps to give Galway the appearance of the most distinctively Irish city in Ireland. On fair days, too, the Connemara people pour into the market square in their white woollen jackets and their black tam-

o'-shanters, and the air is not fuller of the shrieks of pigs and the protesting roar of cattle than of the rich flow of Gaelic so expressive in gossip and in bargaining. Some of the shops of the city have the names of the proprietors written above the windows in Irish—as the shops have, indeed, in a growing number of towns and villages. In some of them you can buy all you want without any need to resort to the use of English at all.

I cannot go through the catalogue of the Irish cities and towns, however, though I do not like to pass without speaking of Cork which I have not seen and Derry which I have seen, and twenty others. As for the smaller towns and villages, these are for the most part market towns, and have neither industrial life nor dignity save in the beauty of the situation of many of them. They consist largely of churches of the various denominations, drapers' shops, public-houses, a hotel or two, a post-office, and a police-barracks. To a stranger, a small Irish town may often seem at first sight to be merely a collection of public-houses, but this is because a public-house in an Irish country-town is very different from what it is elsewhere. It is commonly a general store with a license to sell beer and whiskey. The farmer who goes marketing does not like to have to go from shop to shop looking for what he wants. He prefers to get everything so far as he can at the same place, and the place always finds it worth its while to sell him a glass of whiskey as he is making his purchases. In

addition to his glass of whiskey, however, he may get his meat, his coal, his groceries, his seed, peppermint drops for his wife, and half-a-dozen other things, in the same shop. In progressive towns, the publicans are more inclined to make their trade a drink trade pure and simple ; but in towns like these the spirit-grocery is much too common, and has long been recognised as a curse because of the extent to which it leads to drinking among women.

On an ordinary week-day the country-town is one of the most deserted and indolent-looking places in the world. Ireland is, so far as most of the towns are concerned, a nation of shopkeepers, and, as there is often no industrial life to keep the place busy from hour to hour, it is surprising that the people have kept any capacity for work at all.

Every town has its share of men hanging over bridges and leaning against walls, and women standing in the doors and busily watching nothing happen. It is not that they are born lazy but that they are bred lazy. There is nothing for them to do, and there will not be anything for them to do until Irishmen begin, among other things, to invest their savings, not in the Post-Office Savings Bank, but in Irish industrial enterprises. Some people talk as though the increase in the Irish Savings Bank deposits is a sign of great prosperity. It is not entirely so. It shows chiefly a terrible want of enterprise among the older people, and a refusal to

raise the standard of living as it has been raised in other civilised countries. The low standard of living and the dead air of the towns and the country-sides have resulted in sending an ever-increasing proportion of the population to plant cabbages in workhouse gardens, and to gibber behind the walls of lunatic asylums.

It may not be out of place here to touch upon the injury which this poverty and lifelessness have done to the character of the people in a few parts of the country. This injury is noticeable both in the poorest towns and in the poorest country-sides. It appears especially in the corruption of their civic and corporate life. There is more than one Board of Poor Law Guardians, for instance, in which the highest appointments are practically for sale. No doctor can hope to secure a dispensary under boards like these unless he has bribed a certain number of the guardians before the election-day. The curious thing is that many good and honest men—good and honest in the ordinary affairs of life—accept bribes on occasions of this sort. They hold, I suppose, that one doctor is practically as good as another, and that, when money is flying about, they might as well have their share of it, like a clergyman at a wedding. There was one man who received a bribe of £10 for his vote in a dispensary election, and was afterwards sent £15 by a second candidate. A third candidate then approached him through an agent, and was so anxiously in need of the vote that he

asked the man to put his own price on it. The guardian named the price, and the doctor was temporarily a happy man. On the election-day, however, the guardian shammed a sudden and surprising illness, which kept him in bed so that he could not cast his vote. Of course, a case like this would be exceptional even on the most corrupt local bodies. It is pleasant to know, too, that in the most prosperous parts of Ulster, Munster and Connacht, and in all Leinster bribery of this sort is practically unknown. Corruption, where it exists in Dublin and Belfast and the big towns, is of another kind. It is the less easily definable corruption which exists where men enter public life in order, as the phrase goes, to feather their own nests. In Dublin, lately, the election of a number of Sinn Féiners on the City Council is generally admitted to have made wonderfully for the purification of public life.

The poverty of some of the small towns—the towns that are little more than villages—has, I have suggested, been responsible for a good deal of the corruption of which I have spoken. The extent of this poverty will be realised by anyone who visits one of the towns in question on a Friday—the day on which the old age pensions are paid out at the post-office. Old age pension day is in many places almost as busy a day as market day itself. It is certainly busier than any other day in the week but that. I was in a little town in the south of Galway recently on a Friday,

and I beheld a spectacle which struck me as most remarkable. Along all the roads leading to the town, old men and women came jolting in on their donkey carts, and before noon the carts were standing in a sort of red-wheeled regiment in the market-square. The town looked almost as if it had no inhabitants younger than eighty. Old men with wrinkled hats and grey whiskers moved about the main street or stood within the door of a public-house full of wealth and gossip. Aged women—some of them rheumatically bent, some of them girlishly agile on their feet—carried their baskets under their entangling shawls from shop to shop, buying here a pennyworth of pins and there a packet of tea, and standing still every now and then on the pavement when a chance of talk arose. The town was murmurous with old people: it was grotesque and crooked-looking with them. Even the landlady of the nominal hotel in which I lodged was an old crumpled woman, who coughed like a sheep as she went about the deserted rooms of her high relic of a house, which seemed as though no hand had dusted its carpetless stairs or its cobwebbed walls or made any efforts to mend its creaking doors since the old days when the military were quartered in the town, and gentlemen pulled up for a meal at the hotel as they posted on their way to the gaieties of cities. In the evening a half-aged ballad-singer came from nowhere into the empty market-square—a dirty-faced and ragged man who looked

older than he was—and howled songs about Robert Emmet and Irishmen who had died and suffered in other ways, and I went over and bought a few of his ballads. The songs he sang were full of good memories, but the town heard him listlessly from behind its small dimly-lighted windows. It was as though he had intruded with unnecessary patriotic songs into the porches of the dead.

Irish towns, on the other hand, vary as widely as Irish farms. Most of them have sufficient youth and prosperity to enjoy a circus or a cinematograph entertainment now and then, and they have even an appearance of buoyancy and colour at the time of a Gaelic League Féis. The bank-clerks and the shop-boys have boating-clubs, and an Irish regatta, with its roulette tables, its ballad-singers, its three-card tricks, its booths of dulce and yellow man, is an excitement worth living to see. Except within the Gaelic League itself, however, there is far too much social narrowness in some of the towns. There is commonly one social set which looks down on Ireland and Irish things; there are shades and half-shades of respectability; “two-pence,” as the saying goes, “looks down on three-halfpence”; and there is an amount of cliquery and snobbery which is unknown in the country places. This is chiefly because no healthy wind of public opinion, or national opinion, blows there. You have only to meet the ordinary type of young man who lives in a small town, playing tennis and golf and despising his neighbours, to



THE TREATY STONE, LIMERICK.
(King John's Castle to left and St. Mary's Cathedral to right.)



realise how dull and empty of personality Irish men can be when they are without patriotism. They have plenty of physical courage, and even of the family virtues, but they are imitation people without any delight in their faces or colour in their lives. They are constantly grumbling about their neighbours and their surroundings, and if any one tries to do anything out of the ordinary they pour contempt and suspicion on him over their meals as a self-seeker and disturber of the peace. These young men, of course, were educated on lines which implied that Ireland really was a country to keep quiet about, and so they are scarcely to be blamed for having grown up so uninterested and uninteresting. You could not talk with one of them for half-an-hour, however, without realising that from the aesthetic point of view, if from no other, patriotism is one of the first essentials of Irish life. Did not Aristotle say that it was the end of education to make men patriots? He would have been doubly confirmed in his opinion if he had listened for a few minutes to the conversation of the superior type of young Irish townsman.

I have already said that the circumstances of town life vary from place to place. Amid their very differences, however, all Irish towns have a sufficient number of features in common. The outside cars in the streets, the women going about in their shawls, the number of merry barefoot children, the corner-boys leaning against the walls

till the season for the militia-training comes round, the gloom and strength of the policemen's figures going up and down, the proprietorial names above the public-houses, and twenty other things, unite to give a composite picture which will serve for any town. I deal elsewhere with the religion, the sports, the food, the clothes and the manners of the people. With regard to theatres and so forth, it may be mentioned that the big towns have their theatres and music halls, but that, with the exception of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, where Mr W. B. Yeats and his fellow-workers have inaugurated a beautiful and critical school of national drama, these are mere pieces of England unnaturally dumped down in Ireland and served for the most part by English touring companies. The Ulster Literary Theatre in Belfast is an institution, not a building; it has already produced several admirable comedies of Ulster life. Cork, too, has adventured successfully in the production of national drama, and in Galway—indeed, everywhere where there is a Gaelic League centre—companies have been brought together from time to time for the performance of short plays in the Irish language. The Gaelic League holds an annual festival—the Oireachtas—in Dublin, and in connection with this a number of prizes are awarded for plays in Irish, the winning plays being performed during Oireachtas week. As for the art of painting, the recently-founded Municipal Art Gallery in Dublin contains

a collection of modern European masters—Monet, Manet, Degas, Mancini, Corot, and others—which is among the most important of its kind. Ireland, however, has a number of native artists of more than Irish reputation—Mr Nathaniel Hone, Mr George Russell (A.E.), Mr Orpen, and Mr Jack Yeats, to name no others. As for literature and music, I hope to touch upon them in another chapter.

CHAPTER XI

GAMES AND DANCES

IRELAND is almost sufficiently rich in native games to be able to amuse herself without importing from abroad any games at all. She is short of light summer games, indeed, though I have seen it contended that both tennis and golf are games of Irish origin. Dr J. P. Henry recently discovered a passage in the old heroic literature, describing a game played by Cuchullain, and certainly this had many of the features of modern golf. I see even the game of croquet attributed to Irish invention in Mr Woodgate's wildish book of reminiscences. I do not know what grounds Mr Woodgate had for making this charge.

The distinctive games of Ireland to-day are hurling and Gaelic football. Hurling is a game with some resemblance to hockey, and until recently it was popular in Protestant Ulster country-places as well as in other parts of Ireland. It is known there as "cammon" or "shinty," and I have myself played it with other boys with bits of sticks in a haggard. Hurling is a game played between teams of seventeen men a side, and one of the main differences between it and hockey

is that the hurler is not forbidden to raise his stick higher than his shoulder or to hit with both sides of the stick. A hurler, however, will tell you that hurling is as different from hockey as night from afternoon. Besides goal-posts of ordinary width, there are two wider posts outside the others, and when the ball passes between these, a point is scored. Three points are equal to one goal. The player is allowed to catch the ball in his hand, but is not allowed to lift it from the ground except on the point of his hurley. The game is rapid and vigorous, and is said to be more dangerous for the inexperienced than for the expert. It is being played more and more throughout the country every day, and there is no doubt that it deserves to be popular on its merits, apart from all question of national sentiment. Girls play a variety of hurling called *camóguidheacht*.

Irish athletes are not as a rule so positive regarding the merits of Gaelic football as they are regarding those of hurling. I have heard more than one of them declare that, though Gaelic football is a better game than association, it is not so good a game as rugby. It would be foolish for an unathletic person like myself to offer any dogmatic opinion on the matter, but I think Gaelic football could be mended into as good a game as any. It has been suggested at different times that it would be a more exciting game if points were abolished and only goals allowed to count in the score, for the point system exists

here as in hurling. As it is, however, it is a fine game when played between two well-matched teams of seventeen a side. It may be described as a catch-and-kick game, for the player is allowed to catch the ball and to bounce it before kicking it, but not to hold it and run with it.

Gaelic football and hurling are played all over Munster and Leinster and in the Falls Road district of Belfast. But Connacht is a province in which, for some reason or other, the old Irish games do not flourish as they ought, though, of course, even here they are played in some places. Munster seems to have more sporting vigour than any of the other provinces. In the industrial parts of Ulster, the working classes play association football to a great extent, and in nearly all the large towns through the country there are rugby clubs for the middle-classes. It must be said that the rugby game has been nationalised to a far greater degree than association, and it is claimed that the game as played in Ireland has various distinctions and virtues when contrasted with the rugby football of other countries.

Cricket has never aroused much interest in Ireland except within a comparatively narrow circle, and lacrosse, at which the counties of Antrim and Down excelled for a good number of years, seems now to be dying out of existence. Lacrosse, by the way, has always been played in Ireland as a summer game—not as a winter game, according to the English custom.

Polo is a favourite game with the wealthier classes, and grounds for racing, steeple-chasing and jumping are plentiful in many parts of the country. Irishmen are all supposed to be good judges of a horse. Certainly, a great proportion of country gentlemen, rich farmers and professional men are enthusiasts for riding and hunting, and the mettle of Irish riders and horses is proverbial.

Cock-fighting is still a favourite pastime in some of the midland counties of Ulster, and encounters between the cock-fighters and the police now and then form the subject of a newspaper paragraph.

As for indoor games, the only distinctively national indoor game I know is spoil-five with its variants. This is a card game which is played in all parts of Ireland, and in which the value of the cards must seem extraordinarily topsy-turvy to players of games like nap and bridge. The five of trumps is the best card, and after it, if I remember right, come the ace of hearts, the ace of trumps, Jack, King and Queen in order, while among the other cards the highest card in a red suit wins, and the lowest card in a black suit. There is a great deal of gambling over spoil-five and other games in some of the farm-houses, and, where money is rare, it is not unusual to play for the delf on the dresser, the geese in the field, and even bulkier stakes. Cards, indeed, are a passion in many Irish homes, and Mr Yeats's lines about "old men playing at cards with a twinkling of ancient hands" give us a picture of many a farm

parlour and kitchen on a winter evening. I know a house in which regularly every winter evening at seven o'clock the game begins, and I think this is no exceptional instance of enthusiasm. Of course, the better-known card-games are common as well as spoil-five, but spoil-five may be regarded as essentially the national game, though I do not know whether it is Irish in origin or not.

Chess is a game of which we are constantly hearing in the old heroic legends, and the chess-boards and chess-men of the kings were often decorated with gold and studded with jewels. There is a doubt, I believe, as to whether the game anciently played in Ireland resembled more closely chess or draughts. At the present day, both games are played a good deal, but not to a remarkable extent.

I suppose in this connection it will not be inappropriate to speak of Irish dancing. Some people declare that the ancient Irish did not dance at all—at least, that no trace or mention of dancing is to be found in their literature. Dancing, however, has flourished in Ireland for several centuries, and Irish dances were popular at the Court of Queen Elizabeth. The usual dances are different sorts of jigs and reels—very unlike the jigs and reels which tail-coated Paddies and short-skirted colleens so often perform for the amusement of the non-Irish—sometimes even of the Irish themselves. The most remarkable quality in Irish dancing is its mixture of high spirits, and

what, for want of a better word, I must call decorum. Irish dancers do not bring their arms into play as do the dancers of Scotland, but keep the upper parts of their bodies curiously still. Further, there is no seizing of waists in Irish dances, except in some square dances on the model of quadrilles, and these the purists declare are not real Irish dances at all. It is always exhilarating to see the dances that take place in barns and on kitchen-floors, where the men in their thick-soled, heavy-nailed boots perform wonderful feats of agility.

Besides jigs and reels and the ordinary country dance or long dance, there are also a number of what might be called picture dances or drama dances. The Rocky Road to Dublin, for instance, gives a humorous impression of a limping journey. The Walls of Limerick had perhaps a similarly imitative origin. As for the Waves of Tory, with its rhythmical ups and downs, to watch it is to have one's senses exhilarated as by the sight of the hosts of the waves advancing towards the shore.

Irish dances, it may be said, are not danced in all parts of Ireland, though they are now being spread with great enthusiasm. It is impossible to foretell whether they will ever completely drive foreign dances out of Ireland. Some of the revivalists themselves have no objection to the introduction of foreign dances and games, provided that the national dances and games are firmly established again as part of the social life of the people.

CHAPTER XII

FOOD, CLOTHES, ETC.

I HAVE already made a good many references to the food and dress of different classes of people in Ireland. In the matter of food, the things that strike one most are the comparatively small amount of meat that is eaten even by people who can afford it, and the general popularity of the mid-day, as compared with the evening, dinner. A thousand years ago, we are told, late dinner was the rule, and in many town and country houses at the present time the late tea rather than the mid-day dinner is the most distinctive meal of the day. Sometimes in the towns you have what is called "high tea," with meat or fish, but even without these, tea is frequently an abundant and delightful meal owing to the varieties of bread which are put on the table. Barn-brack is an Irish word meaning "speckled cake," and besides barn-bracks you will often have on the table scones and farls of wheaten, soda and Indian meal bread, oat-cake, baps, slim-cakes, seed-cakes, loaves, potato-bread, or fadge, and various other sorts of bread. You may not have all these on the table at once, but you will have a good number of them if you are

invited to share the hospitality of a prosperous farm-house.

As for the tea itself, it is probably as good as any you will find in Europe. The people as a whole have not yet got used to the cheaper sorts of tea, but are often willing to pay fifty per cent. or even a hundred per cent. more for their tea than English people in similar circumstances will pay. Thus 3s. and 3s. 6d. a pound are not uncommon prices for tea among comparatively poor people. I am afraid, however, it is only a matter of time till cheap tea becomes a rule in Ireland. China tea is extremely rare, and the people like their tea as much for its strength as for its quality. The excellence of the tea one gets in Ireland is probably due to the pleasant spring water of the country as much as to any merit in the tea itself.

Where the people in the country rise at six or earlier, they often dine at twelve o'clock in the day, but one is not surprised to get dinner in the country at any hour between twelve and two in the afternoon. If dinner is at twelve, tea will be between four and five, and there will be some milk and bread-and-butter between nine and ten before going to bed. Porridge is sometimes a morning, and sometimes an evening, dish. I think very early hours are more usual in Ulster than in the other provinces. In the towns, tea-time is any time between five and seven.

As regards the more substantial foods, it may be said that the small farmers and the labourers

scarcely ever touch them. Meat is especially rare. Bacon, of course, is eaten, but nothing more forcibly shows the abnormal condition into which the country has sunk than the fact that the Irish farmer exports his own superior bacon in order to make enough money to be able to import and eat inferior American bacon. It is another curious example of national waste. In the year 1905, Ireland exported dead meats to the value of £2,482,035, and imported dead meats to the value of £2,281,226—almost an equal amount—most of this being bacon. Thus we see Ireland carrying on a foreign trade in bacon to the value of four or five million pounds a year, and being a good deal poorer instead of richer as the result. "There must," as one writer puts it, "be an inadequate adjustment in the commercial arrangements of a country where commodities coming in are met and passed by exactly similar commodities going out." Some people have grown so accustomed to thinking that nothing good can come out of Ireland that they possibly even prefer American bacon to home-grown bacon. I know that this preference of the foreign to the national article is common in regard to such things as flour. Several grocers have told me how difficult it is to persuade farmers to take Irish instead of imported flour, though every expert knows that good Irish flour is as cheap and as fine in quality as any.

Another point about meals in Ireland is that the people, except in some of the more prosperous



GRINDING CORN IN THE OLD WAY.

or cosmopolitan households, do not as a rule drink beers and wines at their dinner to the same extent as the people of other countries. They prefer, as a rule, tea or milk or buttermilk—a fine drink which is fast disappearing in these days of the creameries. Potatoes and buttermilk make an excellent occasional meal in many farm-houses. There is also a curious sort of milk-food which has been popular in Ireland since Pagan times. This is made from beestings, the milk taken from cows which have just calved. Though unfit for drinking, it is heated till it becomes thick curds, and these have a pleasant taste enough. Among alcoholic drinks, the favourite drink with the younger men is stout or porter. If you go into a public-house in Ireland and ask for “a pint,” a pint of stout will be brought to you. The Irish public-house, it may be said in this connection, has usually very little about it of the inn or tavern. It has not, save in exceptional cases, even a romantic name, like “The Sign of the Good Intent” or “The Prodigal’s Return,” but is called simply after the proprietor. It is sociable, however, in that it is not generally divided into class compartments, like the saloon, private bar, and public bar, but offers equal and indiscriminating hospitality to all who enter it, from the sweep to the shoneen.

I do not know that much more need be said as to the distinctive features of Irish food and drink. I have already spoken of the popular

contempt for turnip-tops. It may be worth mentioning that dulse, or dilisk—a kind of dried sea-weed—is frequently eaten by holiday-makers, and it may be bought in handfuls from the baskets of old women at the fairs.

Ice-cream shops with Italian names over the doors have become a popular institution in Belfast of late years, and the factory-girls crowd into these at the dinner-hour to eat unhealthy fish, peas, and pastries, and to drink unhealthy minerals. One or two of the factories, I believe, like the York Street and the Jennymount mills, have now restaurants connected with them at which the workers can have good cheap food, but these are the exceptions.

To come to the matter of dress, it might truly enough be said that the only distinctively national garment which is to be found all over Ireland to-day is the shawl worn by the women. In some parts of the country, the wives of the farmers as well as of the labourers wear the shawl; though many of them, of course, wear hats and bonnets in addition on Sundays. Black or grey is perhaps the prevailing colour, but in different parts of the country different colours are the vogue, and even the fashion in which the shawl is arranged varies from place to place. In one district you will find fawn-coloured or brown shawls almost the only wear, and these have often broad borders with designs in other colours woven into them. Elsewhere the women frequently wear two shawls—

one over the shoulders and the other over the head. In the manufacturing towns, they draw the shawl tight and nunnishly across the brows and pin it beneath the chin, and on a wet evening the lamp-lit streets are filled with hurrying Madonna-like women of a strange, hidden beauty. Again you may find the shawl worn like a wild hood that has half-fallen from the head, while one end is flung loosely round the shoulder. Check handkerchiefs are often worn over the head, and in some parts the old women wear dainty frilled caps.

The national dress of the men is said to be the kilt, but this is only worn as yet by a number of enthusiastic pioneers. The Irish kilt is not made of tartan, but is saffron-coloured, though tartan, I believe, is a thing of Irish origin. The ordinary costume for men is sufficiently unremarkable in cut; elderly men seem to have a preference for a kind of morning coat. The material of which the clothes are made, on the other hand, is of distinctive interest, and a bog-coloured coat of dyed home-spun has an appropriate beauty of its own. In Connemara the men wear a *báinín*—a jacket of white flannel—which helps to give an air of local wonderfulness to the roads and the fields. The women, too, with their petticoats of beautiful shades of red remind us of a time when the Irish were noted for their love of colours, though the red petticoat of the town is sometimes eye-scaring enough.

The red petticoat of rural Ireland, I may say, is of a totally different colour from that worn in pseudo-Irish plays on the British stage. It is not an offensive scarlet; its colour is nearer that of a red carnation. It is not, of course, the custom to wear green garments along with it.

I have already spoken of the beauty of the heavy dyed garments of the women of Achill, some of bright blue, some of bright red, some of bright green. It is customary to use an incredible number of yards of stuff in these skirts, so that the figure has something of a clumsy look. I heard from one girl how an Achill woman had reproved her for immodesty, because she wore a skirt of the ordinary shape and measure.

The pampooties, or cow-skin sandals, worn by the people of the Aran Islands, are the most distinctive foot-dress to be found in Ireland. In some parts of the country you will also occasionally see an old woman going the roads in martins—a kind of soleless socks which would do little, one imagines, to keep the feet either warm or dry on uncomfortable days. Nearly all the grown-up people wear boots, however, and it is only the children as a rule who run about with their feet as bare as their heads.

There is scarcely any need to refer to the dress of the professional classes in the towns. It is of the cosmopolitan sort, and the only noticeable thing in regard to it is the comparative infrequency of the tall hat.

CHAPTER XIII

RELIGION

IF you are in a little town in any part of Ireland—except the north-east—about noon, when the chapel-bell rings for the angelus, you will see all the men suddenly taking their hats off and crossing themselves as they say their mid-day prayers. The world loses its air of work, or of commonplace idleness, and the streets take on an intense beauty for the moment as the old people and the young half-hide their eyes and murmur a rapid prayer to the Mother of God. The boy walking by a loaded cart stands still with bared head or stumbles forward, praying as he walks. In the doors of the houses, in the entries, on the bridge over the river, the town assumes a multitudinous reverence as the tide of prayer sweeps through it to the dinning music of the bell. Even the policeman, ludicrously stiff in his military uniform, lowers his head with a kind of salute and offers homage to heaven. I confess I like this daily forgetfulness of the world in the middle of the world. It brings wonder into almost every country town in Ireland at least once every day.

On Sunday, I imagine, Ireland must be one of

the most religious-looking countries in Europe. North, South, East and West, nearly every one who is physically fit goes to church or to chapel. Of course, there are a few agnostics even in Ireland, and all the towns of any size have their growing population of indifferents—people who stay away from church, not because they believe something else than orthodox Christianity, but because they believe nothing at all. On the other hand, there must be a greater proportion of men as compared with women attending the churches in Ireland than in most Christian countries. Sunday wears a different appearance in different parts of the country, but not much so during the time of the morning religious services. Until after one o'clock in the day the streets and the roads are mainly filled with men, women and children who have been to church, or who are going there.

The Ulster Sabbath is more like the Scottish Sabbath than anything else. The trams are running in Belfast, but there are still a good many people in the city who would no more think of riding a tram on a Sunday than of picking your pocket. As for travelling in a railway train on a Sunday, this is looked on by the strict as the loosest behaviour. So rigid is the idea of Sabbath-keeping even in Belfast, that when a few years ago a gentleman bequeathed some money to the city for the provision of music in the parks, making his bequest conditional upon the music

being given on Sundays as well as on week-days, the bequest had to be refused. Had it been accepted, there would likely have been an outbreak of Sabbath riots against Sabbath-breaking.

The feeling against playing games or holding political meetings on Sunday is still strong, though it is fast weakening. Some years ago, a number of boys went out to play hurling in the bottom of an old circular fort which was only a few hundred yards away from a public-house greatly frequented by bona fide travellers from Belfast on Sundays. One day, the bona fides, shocked that so gross an outrage on the peace of the Sabbath should be going on almost within smelling-distance of their pints of stout, sallied forth and, along with a crowd of villagers and country-people, made an onslaught on the boys. The boys defended themselves through a vigorous fight with their hurling-sticks, but they were mercilessly beaten, and one of them at least retains the marks of the battle till this day.

The British Trade Unionists, I remember, were shocked some years ago when it was proposed, at a congress they held in Belfast, to hold a demonstration on a Sunday, and the motion was defeated by Belfast votes. Mr John Burns was so enraged when the result of the voting was announced that he cried out: "Belfast bigotry!" On the following Saturday I was present at a great labour gathering in Ormeau Park, at which Mr Burns was one of the speakers. Some sour working-

man in the crowd kept mumbling things while Mr Burns was speaking from a wagonette, and at last hurled at his head the phrase: "You and your Sabbath demonstrations!" "It's all right, my friend," said Mr Burns in a jaunty way he then had, "this is not the Sabbath." "It would be all the same to you if it was," retorted the other with a growl, and I thought he had the best of the argument.

Sunday in some of the country parts of Ulster is a still stricter affair than has yet been suggested. Some of the older people—people, too, of high culture and intelligence—would not open until Monday a letter that came to them by Sunday morning's post: for, ridiculously enough, there is a Sabbath post in some of the most Sabbatarian parts of Ireland. It is regarded by the extremely orthodox as a piece of doubtful morality even to go for a walk on Sunday. Whistling on Sunday is suppressed as a sin, even if one whistles a psalm-tune, and the same may be said of the playing of musical instruments, though many people, who believe it is wicked to play an organ in church, do not object to a harmonium in the Sunday School. Boating is not permitted: going into a fruit-garden to eat goosberries is immoral. There are even some subjects of conversation which you will do ill to broach on a Sunday in strict company. I have often thought it odd, however, that not even in the most scrupulous houses do you meet with the old Scottish sort of Sabbatarianism which

prohibits the cooking of meat on Sundays, and sets whole families down to cold dinners. In Ulster Sunday is the fullest-feeding day of the week.

Sabbatarianism, as I have said, is dying fast in Ulster, and you will find clergymen discussing all manner of subjects nowadays, and even reading novels, on Sundays. Protestants usually think that the Irish Catholic has no regard for Sunday, especially after mid-day, but had any of them been present one day when I attended a service in the Catholic Cathedral in Sligo they would have been surprised to hear a young priest denouncing Sabbath-breaking with a vigour worthy of an orthodox Presbyterian. I met a Catholic school-master in the same county who expressed his horror at the universality with which hurling and football were being played on Sundays. I reminded him that priests frequently attend these matches. "I don't care," he said; "I think it's wrong."

Catholic Ireland, as a whole, would not agree to so strict a rule. The majority of Catholics are quite satisfied with their Sunday observance when once Mass is over, and, in one country place I know, the people coming from the twelve o'clock Mass turn into the principal shop of the district to make their week's purchases. This shop is at once a hotel, a public-house, a post-office, and a general store, and the people, I think, are supposed to be going to it for their letters. The road in front of the shop is filled like a market-square, the young men sitting on a wall, the

men with beards standing round and getting rid of the week's gossip, and the old women in their beautiful frilled caps and check shawls pacing up to the shop door and talking to all and sundry in their rapid Irish. It all seems like an agreeably miniature market without the noise of animals.

In some of the lonely country parts, where the people have to come long distances to chapel, you will see a still more curious Sabbath sight than this business of commerce and gossip. These isolated chapels have sometimes a low white stable connected with them, just as some old-fashioned Presbyterian churches have, and, when Mass is over, you will see the people slowly getting ready their cars and their horses to go home. It is odd enough to see men riding from church on horseback in their rustic respectability, but the spectacle becomes comic when you see their wives sitting behind them, pillion fashion, wearing the foolish bonnets and black jackets for which countrywomen discard their week-day clothes on great occasions like Sunday. I met a whole cavalcade of women riding from chapel like this behind their husbands one Sunday morning when I was driving in the south of County Mayo. The sight surprises a man from town like a piece of romance: there is something fascinating and gipsyish about it.

Irish religion, however, is not a mere affair of Sunday. It is an essential part of the life of the house every day of the week. The Catholic has

his crucifix in some convenient place to remind him of the sacrifice of Christ at his prayers, and the Protestant has the Bible to turn to for help in times of ease and difficulty. On some evenings, if you are in a Catholic house in the most Irish parts of the country, you may hear a strange crying—almost a lamentation—such as you might expect in days of religious revival. This is at the hour of family prayer. The family worship of Protestants in country places is usually less demonstrative but no less impressive. In some Presbyterian houses a psalm is first sung, and the members of the family then read a chapter of the Bible, verse about. The servant joins in the reading, and, as her education is usually of the most elementary nature, her treatment of some of the old Hebrew names, and even of the simpler English words, is at times curiously original. Occasionally, an old evangelist or lay-reader goes round the poorer houses and holds a small family service in them, and these lay-readers have often a way of being more violent than sweetly reasonable in their propagation of Christian truths.

“O Lord,” one of them prayed in a house I know, “do thou shake these people over hell-fire, but shake them in mercy!”

Sometimes you feel that there is almost an excess of the terrors of hell in the religion of the Protestants, and I believe some priests insist with equal vigour upon the penal side of religion.

One of the most remarkable events in the

history of Ireland during the nineteenth century was the Ulster Revival in 1859, when half the province was swept by a storm of religious fear and fervour. The very children in the schools in some places would suddenly cry out in lamentation for their sins and fall prostrate. The factory girls would be caught with the new passion of repentance at their work, and within a short time dozens of them would be lying "stricken" on the ground. One spinning factory had to close for two days, owing to the workers having been incapacitated for work by the revival, and when it was opened again, only about half the hands were able to resume their duties. The printers in a Coleraine newspaper office were seized with the new exaltation on a Thursday, and the appearance of the paper was delayed for a whole day in consequence. In the churches it was a common thing for people suddenly to spring to their feet with loud cries and then fall prostrate to the ground. I have heard from a lady, who was present at services on occasions like these, how the women used to be carried out from the churches into the open air, with all and sundry dragging at the hoops of their crinolines. Men and women who were stricken often lost all their bodily powers for the time being, and, falling into a trance, would remain deaf, dumb, blind and motionless for hours. These trances were looked on as something miraculous, because the people who fell into them would frequently give warning beforehand to the

bystanders regarding the hour at which the trance would begin and the hour at which they would wake out of it again. Probably there is an explanation in hypnotism of the prophetic gifts of these "sleepers."

Another phenomenon, the genuineness of which is doubted by many of the Presbyterians themselves, was common during the Ulster Revival. This was the appearance of marks, comparable to the stigmata of St Francis, on the bodies of certain religious enthusiasts. Sometimes these represented printed characters, sometimes mystic symbols, and those who could show them made a wide reputation as prophets and people divinely honoured. We hear of instances where admission was charged to visitors to the houses of such peculiar people, but it is fair to suppose that those who put religious sensations upon the market in this way were charlatans taking advantage of the spirit of the times. I cannot agree, however, with clergymen who put down all these apparent miracles as impostures. Presbyterian leaders are sometimes too much afraid of occurrences that look like miracles, if these are of a date later than apostolic times.

The ordinary Protestant laity, I think, is free from this scepticism, and a record of the experiences of commonplace people during the Revival times, if written from the people's instead of from the clergyman's point of view, would make amazing reading. A clergyman wrote

a book, "The Year of Grace," on the period, but it is a mere tract when it might have been a book of the wonders of the human imagination and spirit.

"I believe, as a matter of fact," a friend once wrote to me, "the poorer Protestants all over the country share the superstitions of their Catholic neighbours—if superstitions is the right word." Certainly there are parts of the country in which they resort to the Holy Wells with the same hopefulness of cures.

Speaking of miraculous things reminds me that I once met a man who believed he had performed a miracle—and he was a Presbyterian. He was an old and almost child-like man, who followed the profession of colporteur; in other words, he went into the Catholic districts and tried to persuade the people to read the Bible, in the hope that they would afterwards become Protestants. He declared that he had one day been called into a house where there was a dead girl, and that God had put it in his power, something after the pattern of Elijah in the widow's house, to raise the dead to life. It was impossible to doubt the old man's sincerity, and, if he was as accurate as he was sincere, the people of the district were not slow to believe that he possessed some miraculous powers. Even the priest came up to him some time afterwards, he said, and asked him to touch him on the breast and cure an apparently incurable pain of the heart.

This brings me to yet another feature in the religious life of Ireland—the proselytising tendency of the Protestants. The militant Protestants have never been weary of attempting to convert the Catholics to their own point of view. They even took advantage of the terrible Famine of the forties — the “starvation” as Mitchel called it, for the people died in the midst of plentiful harvests—to give spoonfuls of Protestantism alternately with spoonfuls of soup to famishing people too far gone in weakness to refuse both. Wise in their generation, they had missionaries trained to speak the Irish language so as to get the more intimately to the inner spirit of the people, and the decay of the Irish language became much more rapid when it began to be regarded in many places as the language of the Protestant proselytiser. I wonder if it was with an eye to its value as a medium of proselytism that, at the Presbyterian General Synod of Ulster in 1828, it was, as we find in the published Minutes, “overtured and agreed to, that it be most earnestly recommended by the Synod to candidates for the Ministry to apply themselves to the study of the Irish language.” Whatever may have been the reason for this overture, it is a lasting pity that the recommendation has never been carried out.

As I have said, however, the Protestants no sooner began to use Irish in their propaganda than the Catholic priests, or some of them, set to disparaging and discouraging it. Some years ago, there were

parts of Ireland where a stranger, attempting to speak to the people in their own language, was looked on with the utmost suspicion in consequence. Micheal Breathnach, one of the young princes of the Irish revival, yet dead already, found this out one day when he tried to live up to Gaelic League principles in a western town which he was visiting. He spoke to a man in the street in Irish, and before long an inquisitive crowd had gathered round him. They asked him where he came from and where he had learned his Irish, but they would believe nothing he said, and swore that he was a Protestant from Dublin who wanted to make "soupers" of them—a reminiscence of the soul-purchasing soup of Famine times. Ultimately one of them asked him if he knew what weasels' eggs were. He said that he did not. A heap of stones lying by the roadside was pointed out to him, and he was told that those were weasels' eggs, and that, if he didn't clear out, he would be made a present of a few of them. This incident occurred a few years ago, I may say, in one of the most Anglicised towns in the west; but even there the revolution in Irish ideals has produced great changes by to-day.

On the whole, it must be admitted, the Irish Catholic accepts the Protestant missionary with great tolerance. There has been trouble in the streets of Cork, and, I believe, in the streets of Galway, owing to the presence of missionaries preaching militant Protestantism in the public places

in each city. But the Catholics as a whole take these attacks on their faith calmly—much more calmly than would Irish Protestants take similar attacks on Protestantism. The Catholic, indeed, may pray in his churches for the conversion of his non-Catholic fellow-Christians, but I do not believe there is anybody freer from the proselytising spirit than the ordinary Irish Catholic—even the ordinary Irish Catholic priest. A score of exceptions do not disprove my contention. Irish Catholics nearly always give a fine example in respecting the religion of their neighbours. A Protestant rowdy does not object to flinging a stone at a chapel window, but a Catholic rowdy will think twice, or oftener, before he will do any damage to a Protestant Church.

Where Irish Protestantism expresses itself in somewhat militant missions, one might say, Irish Catholicism expresses itself in peaceful processions. You see these winding along the country roads, making solemn music and flying banners, and the streets of some of the towns are busy with them during certain days of the year. These are church or school processions, however. A procession of a different sort is that which every year, on a day in July or August, climbs, in the ancient pilgrim spirit, the rocky cone of Croagh Patrick overlooking Clew Bay. It used to be the custom for the more devout pilgrims to climb this stony way on their knees, but the priests in the end forbade so cruel a display of self-torture. Women, especially

married women who desire children or a blessing on children that will soon be born to them, form a conspicuous part of the long procession, and some of the most ardent take off their boots at the most difficult part of the journey and walk on the stones barefoot. A year or two ago, a lady I know was walking in the procession and stumbled accidentally against one of the women-pilgrims. The woman's husband thrust his shoulder against my friend and pushed her off. "Don't interfere with the lady, Michael," said the woman gently: "sure, she didn't hurt me." "I wouldn't let her push you, Bridgie," declared the man with decision, "not if she was nine months gone."

This incident suggests better than a dozen pages of description the faith, the energy, the primitive drama, of this mountain procession.

Catholic processions in the north have a way of being more political. The Ancient Order of Hibernians, which has an especially strong hold on northern Catholics, is little more than a Catholic counterpart of the Orange Order. It has bands and banners and passwords on much the same model, and, though it is strongly Catholic, the priests sometimes appear to be in doubt as to whether they ought not to denounce it as a secret society. Its Lady-day processions in August, however, have usually a Nationalist rather than a merely sectarian colour, but at the same time it is a question whether they do not make for the introduction of sectarianism into national politics.

Orangeism and Hibernianism, indeed, are mere relics of mediaeval wars. No clear-thinking Irishman now looks on the Irish question as being a question between Protestant and Catholic. If there were no Catholics in Ireland, the Irish question might be of a different colour, but it would be none the less acute.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LIVES OF THE WORKERS

I HOPE that before long some one with knowledge and courage will write a book about the lives of the workers in Ireland. I am not thinking especially about the skilled workers in the towns, organised in Trade Unions and able to secure for themselves as good a wage as the skilled workers in England and Scotland. It is the unskilled labourers, the women and the half-time children, who are most in need of some one to interpret their lives. The question of sweated labour and of child-labour is a crucial one in Ireland to-day. Miss Martindale, that generous-minded and fearless lady-inspector, has stated some of the realities of our industrial conditions in the little-read pages of *Factories and Workshops* blue-books. It may seem surprising to some people that we did not collect and publish the facts ourselves. But the truth is, we were educated in our schools and colleges to take an interest in all things except Irish things, and, when some of the facts of Irish life are put before us, they astonish no one so much as they astonish ourselves.

If you go to Belfast, the chief industrial centre

in Ireland, you will find the skilled artisans in the shipyards and the foundries living in fairly comfortable little brick houses, and earning, as I have said, very decent wages. The unskilled labourers are in a different position. Among the best paid are those who work for the Corporation at a wage of about 21s. weekly—a wage which, I remember, provoked a good deal of protest among otherwise humane people by its generosity when it was first agreed upon. In the shipyards unskilled labour is not so well rewarded. Here the worker's wage may be estimated, I believe, at from 17s. 6d. to 18s. 6d. weekly. In the building trades it varies from 15s. to 17s., and labourers in mills and for small firms get from 12s. to 15s. Carters of six months' experience and over, however, make about 22s. per week; carters for teams get 26s. a week for a ten-hour day; while youths who drive light vans earn 16s. or a little more. Dockers are paid from 4½d. to 6d. an hour.

If we turn to the textile trades—the most important trades in Ulster, for they are established, not only in Belfast, but in Lurgan, Portadown, Ballymena, Lisburn, Derry, and a score of other towns through the province—we shall not find an improved state of affairs. It is the custom to congratulate Belfast on having the ship-building industry to give employment to the men and the linen industry to give employment to the women, and there is some reason for this congratulation. At the same time, these industries have fitted into

each other to the interest of the employers rather than of the employed, and the linen manufacturers seem to regulate the pay of their women-workers on the assumption that the latter are living in the houses of either their husbands or their fathers. I know that Ireland is not the only country in which the economic independence of woman is a burning question—or ought to be. But the conditions which prevail in other countries do not make the conditions which prevail in Ireland in the matter of women's labour any the less objectionable.

Here, approximately, are a few instances of the wages paid to women in the spinning and weaving mills of Belfast. Preparers, spreaders, drawers and rovers get from 8s. 6d. to 11s. per week; spinners earn from 11s. 6d. to 13s.; reelers from 15s. to 17s.; weavers and winders from 8s. to 14s.; though those who are engaged in fine weaving or damask work earn up to 18s. or 19s. As for male workers in these industries, skilled labourers like flax-dressers are paid from 24s. to 28s. per week, and roughers from 20s. to 24s. These figures, however, give a rather flattering idea of the wages paid in the textile industries, for it must be remembered that it is always possible that either the cut-throat competition which continually goes on between the spinning and the weaving industries, or some other cause of trade depression, may result in the mills working only short time. Towards the end of 1907, for instance, all the spinning

mills were working for half-time for nearly twelve months, and a friend of mine tells me of a reeler he knew, a married woman, who was trying during all that time to support a family on 6s. 3d. a week. Skilled male labourers, like flax-roughers, were for a time making as low a wage as 10s. 6d. weekly. The workers, indeed, suffer when trade is bad, but they do not gain in proportion when trade is good.

In the early part of 1907, though it was known that several firms had made an extra profit of £80,000, the spinners had to strike for a rise in wages of 6d. a week. The low wages paid in Belfast to women—lowered still further by spells of short work-time and by a ruthless system of fines—undoubtedly mean that many young women are driven on to the streets to eke out a living by prostitution. And yet it is only recently, I think, that any clergyman in Belfast ever thought it worth his while to preach a sermon on the conditions of labour.

So far I have given approximate figures—and I do not think they will be seriously challenged. Warehouse girls' wages, however, are no better than those of factory-workers. In a fairly decent house, a woman stitcher earns from 10s. and 11s. to 18s. a week on the piece-work system, and printers—girls who stencil on to the linen the perforated design—are paid as low as 7s. 6d. Ornamenterers make about 12s. weekly.

The deadliest sin in the labour conditions of

Ireland is neither the low wage paid to unskilled labourers nor that paid to women. It is the system under which boys and girls hardly out of their infancy are employed in the mills at a wage of 3s. 6d. a week. The child half-timer in Lancashire is often an object of sympathy. The plight of the Ulster half-timer, however, is infinitely more pitiable. In Lancashire the child really works half-time every day of the week and goes to school during the other part of the day. In Ulster the child works full time during three days in the week, and attends school on the remaining days. The results which follow, when children of twelve years old or thereabouts are kept working for ten hours a day during three days in the week in a humid atmosphere of from 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit, might have been foreseen. Vitality is slowly squeezed out of them, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that from the age of 15 upwards they die like flies. The death rate in Belfast among young people between the ages of 15 and 20 is double what it is in Manchester. That this is due neither to inherited lack of vitality nor to the condition of Belfast houses is proved by the fact that in the first five years of their life children die less rapidly in Belfast than in Manchester. Miss Martindale, who is as enviably free from the vice of dogmatism as she is from that of melodrama, believes that the over-crowded, ill-ventilated and insufficiently-warmed state of some of the schools may be a partial cause of the

high death-rate among these boys and girls, but there can be little doubt that the half-time system is a ruling cause of such an unnatural rate of mortality. How laborious the conditions under which children are employed in the neighbourhood of Belfast can sometimes be well be best realised from an incident reported by Miss Martindale. "On visiting a flax-scutching mill one morning," she writes, "I found a little girl, aged 12 years, striking flax with a rapidity and dexterity which showed considerable practice. My inquiries were met with what is far too common in Ireland—the most bare-faced untruths. I was told that the child was at the mill for no other purpose than bringing tea to the workers. On visiting the school in the neighbourhood, I was immediately told that this little girl and her sister, aged 10½ years, worked for alternate weeks at the scutching-mill, and were employed there from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on every week day including Saturday. I could not, however, hear of any steps having been taken by the teacher or managers to stop this obviously illegal employment." Miss Martindale also tells how in another factory she found a little girl of thirteen working full time, her teacher apparently having given her an illegal certificate of proficiency.

This is not the worst of the matter, however. Miss Martindale lifts the curtain upon darker things when she describes how, having visited a school frequented by half-timers and taken almost

at random the names and addresses of a few children, she and a colleague went to see some of them in their homes. "We found A. B. suffering from partial blindness," she writes, "with a curious film over both eyes. On examination the Certifying-Surgeon pronounced her to be suffering from a form of ophthalmia, causing intolerance of light, which rendered her quite unfit for any kind of work. C. D. had lost an eye as the result of an accident in the mill. E. F. was suffering seriously from wounded feet; both feet were bound up, and one of them she could not put to the ground. G. H. was suffering from general debility, and was quite unfit for work. All these children had been certified by the Certifying-Surgeon as fit for work, and yet in a few months the result of their work was alarmingly evident."

I wish we had a Mrs Browning in Ireland to give us a new "Cry of the Children," to make us realise the tragedy of these baby-doffers who run to and fro in the heat and moisture of the mills as the whistle of the doffing mistress calls. Perhaps Miss Alice Milligan, who has written with so much passion and vigour on so many national themes, will make a brave and bitter music of this. Indignation, says a famous tag, makes verses, and it is difficult to read without indignation a paragraph like the following, in which Miss Martindale gives us a glimpse of the life of a half-timer.

L. M. was nearly 13 years of age, but her weight in clothes was 57 lbs. and her height 47 inches, which I understand is



30 $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. and 11 inches below the average weight and height. I had her examined by a doctor, who reported : "I have examined L. M., and find her very ill developed for a child of 13 years of age. She is hardly up to the standard of a child of nine years. She is ill cared for, her hair being in an unfit state, and her body covered with marks of scratching to relieve irritation. Her heart seems to me to be dilated and suffering from over strain, and her lungs are not sound. . . . The child is certainly unfit for any but the lightest work, and should not on any account be asked to lift heavy weights or exert herself much." The child is a cager, which necessitates her kneeling on the damp floor of the spinning room and placing the bobbins in the cage as the doffers take them off the frames ; she then places the cage in the place from which the yarn-hawker fetches it. I have had a cage of these bobbins weighed, and found it weighed 28 lbs. The child is bare-footed, and in this damp room wears only a cotton chemise, a skirt and the "jumper," which is a cotton bodice cut low at the neck and with short sleeves. On the night I saw her she complained of headaches on mill days, and she was suffering from a cold. About three months after she had begun work in the mill she was taken with a severe attack of mill fever, and was unable to work for three weeks. About four weeks ago a brother died of spotted fever.

Her family consists of a mother who is not employed in a factory, a father who is often out of work (at present he is in work and earning probably about 12s. a week), and an aunt earning about 10s. a week, an elder sister earning 10s. a week, and five younger children. L. M. earns 4s. 6d. a week as a half-timer. Although the child is nearly 13 years of age, she is only in the second standard ; mentally, however, she is very intelligent, with the pretty manners and love of fairy myths so often found amongst the Irish children. I have heard on good authority that the wages of L. M. were entirely spent in drink by the parents.

It is obvious that a good many of the things I have said in praise of the kindly treatment and

happiness of Irish children must be accepted with reservations, just as some of the things I have said with regard to the respect paid to women in Ireland must be accepted with reservations. Miss Martindale believes that public opinion in Ireland is not opposed to child labour, but I think that public opinion would be opposed to child labour in its crueller forms if only the facts were generally known. There is all the difference in the world between sending little children of eight years old out into the fields to herd cattle, and sending children of eleven and twelve to put in a ten hours' working day in the corrupting air of a factory. The one thing may be an error of thoughtlessness, the other is a sin of cruelty. Children in the country do not lose their merriment through labour: factory children become listless and lifeless, and cease to be capable of play. Observers tell us that, on the days on which the half-timers go to school, they prefer during the recreation-period to sit down instead of running about. In this way you can easily distinguish them from the children who do not work in the mills. In many cases, however, the parents of half-timers do not send their children to school at all. Education is compulsory in Belfast, but the average attendance at the schools is only 69.6 per cent. of the children on the rolls. The average for all Ireland, I believe, is about 65 per cent., as compared with the 85 per cent. of Scotland and the 84 per cent. of England, showing that Belfast

with all its twentieth-century progress is in much the same position educationally as the agricultural parts of the country of which it thinks so poorly. The truth is, there has been a blight and a darkness over the whole land, and our vision has been dim and confused in Belfast as it has been elsewhere.

With regard to the wages of half-timers, the reader may remember that I put them down at 3s. 6d. a week. The last case which I quoted from Miss Martindale's Report mentions 4s. 6d. a week, and Miss Martindale tells us elsewhere of a mill where "cagers and doffers, children between 12 and 14 years, earned as half-timers 4s. 3d. and 4s. 9d. a week." Wages seem to vary considerably. They are, it may be some encouragement to know, a great advance on what they used to be. A friend of mine was recently talking to a Belfast working-man who began work twenty-five years ago at the age of ten at a weekly wage of 1s. 7d.

It was not my intention when I began this book to go into such minute detail with regard to wages and labour conditions. The present chapter, indeed, may seem a little out of place in a book which is a conversation about people and things rather than a scientific consideration of economic and social conditions. Still, it may be no harm to stress the fact that in Ireland we have a labour problem as well as problems of education and agriculture. In Belfast alone there are, according to the Report of the Belfast Health Commission, 28,000 women and children employed in the flax

and linen trade, as compared with 6000 men. And Belfast, as I have shown, stands in danger of losing its youthful vitality unless the conditions under which these people are employed are quickly changed.

It seems to be in danger of developing a slum problem, too, though it has until now been fairly free from anything that could be described as slums. There are hundreds of houses empty in the city at a rent of 2s. 6d. per week, but, as a Town Councillor recently put it, "that was no use to a man with a family of four who had to subsist on 11s. a week." As a consequence, two families often crowd into a small house of this sort, with the result that you have, in the words of another member of the Corporation, "a family of human beings living in upper apartments without the sanitary conveniences necessary for human habitation," these being as a rule downstairs in the back yard.

In Dublin the housing of the poor has long been one of the most pressing of municipal problems. There many of the fine houses which were inhabited by a lavish aristocracy, before the Union with England destroyed hope and effort in the country, are now dens of the most horrid poverty. Two members of the Belfast Public Health Commission visited Dublin some time ago, and found four families "living in a single room, each occupying a corner." I do not think this was an isolated instance.

In the country towns the poor may be happier in their houses, but the ruthless sweating-employer is not unknown even there. I know of one instance of an employer who has founded a new industry, and who keeps his people working from early in the morning until eight at night. The people dare not complain, for there is no other industry in the town to afford an alternative market to their labour.

To come to the workers in the country itself, the agricultural labourer in Ireland is very poorly paid compared to the farm labourer in Scotland, Wales, or England. Mr Wilson Fox's second Board of Trade Report on the earnings of agricultural labourers estimates the average weekly wages in the four countries as follows :—

Scotland	.	.	19s.	3d.
England	.	.	18s.	3d.
Wales	.	.	17s.	3d.
Ireland	.	.	10s.	11d.

These wages, I may say, include the value of all payments in kind, such as free houses, food, and so forth. It is a common thing for a farm labourer to be paid six, seven or eight shillings a week, with a free cottage (worth from 1s. to 1s. 6d. weekly) and meals at the farmer's house extra. He may also have a little patch of garden or a ridge of potatoes in one of his master's fields. His wife and children, too, contribute something to the family income. During the turnip-thinning season a woman working a ten or

eleven hours' day may earn tenpence a day, and if she is strong enough to pull flax she may make anything up to two shillings a day during a week or a fortnight of the year. In ordinary women's work, however, I believe tenpence a day is considered a good wage. Young boys may earn a few pence a day, driving carts or helping with the corn, and doing various odd jobs during the busy season. The figures I have given I have taken from one of the prosperous counties. Probably, in counties like Mayo, where the average weekly wage of a farm labourer is only 8s. 9d., women's and children's wages are correspondingly low.

There is other work besides agricultural labour to be had in some of the country places. This includes cottage work—like embroidery, knitting, and the machining and finishing of shirts and collars—three kinds of work which are sent down by the manufacturers in the big towns to be done cheaply by the women in the rural districts. Miss Martindale made exhaustive inquiries in 1907 into the wages and other labour conditions of these outworkers, taking the County of Donegal as her field of study. She found that women who embroidered handkerchiefs were paid at the rate of 7d. a dozen, and that a dozen handkerchiefs would be a fair day's work for one woman. Monograms could be embroidered at the rate of half-a-dozen a day, and for these half-dozen 4d. would be paid. Initials on handkerchiefs were paid for at the rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. each, and about ten of these could be finished in a

day. Working on a muslin tray-cloth, a woman could earn 10d. for two days' work; on a side-board cloth, she could earn from 4d. to 6d. a day; on a table-cloth, 3s. in four days; and on ladies' skirts, about 3s. 6d. in a week. For knitting men's socks, women were paid 1s. 6d. a dozen, and a worker could seldom knit more than 1 pair or $1\frac{1}{2}$ pairs in a day. The finest socks, which required more labour, were paid for at the rate of 4s. a dozen. Gloves were paid for at the rate of from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a dozen pairs, a pair and a half being regarded as a good day's work.

"In hand knitting," writes Miss Martindale, "the usual day's wage varies from $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 4d., but the number of hours worked are far longer than in sprigging (embroidery), and we heard of work being carried on from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m."

Coming to the machining and finishing of shirts and collars, we find the average wage as high as 10d. or 1s. a day, but this often means a working day which begins early in the morning and lasts till midnight.

These wages seem wretched enough, but they do not sufficiently denote the wretched condition, economically speaking, of the workers in some of the cottage industries of Donegal. A good many readers probably know already that the work is usually distributed among the outworkers by shopkeepers whom the town manufacturers appoint as their local agents. Miss Martindale describes one district, for instance, as "almost studded with

little shops in which sprigging for distribution to outworkers is to be seen on the shelves and in the windows, together with the ordinary groceries and draperies." Shop-keepers, of course, find it very profitable to undertake these agencies, for not only do they make a 10 per cent. commission on the work they give out—which may be anything from £20 worth to £100 worth of work per month—but their business is greatly increased by the fact that a vast number of outworkers become their steady customers. The shop-keeper agents, unfortunately, are not always satisfied with these two streams of prosperity. Many of them do not pay the women workers in wages at all, but in goods out of the shop—often priced far beyond their value. These shop-keepers—I do not, of course, mean all the shop-keeper agents, but the many unscrupulous people among them—are the worst sort of gombeen men. They know that ready money is a rare thing in the labourers' cottages and on the small farms, and they allow the country people to get heavily into their debt, knowing that the men of the house will bring a lump of money home with them from the British harvests, and that the women will be able to work off the rest of the debt by doing sprigging and knitting work.

Cash-payments for goods are the exception rather than the rule in some places, and debts are allowed to run up to the extent of £20 or £30. It is a fact, of course, that in many poor parts of

Ireland the people could not exist at all were it not for the long credit permitted by the shop-keepers, and so the gombeen shop-keeper may be looked on from one point of view as a public benefactor. On the other hand, though some of the shop-keepers are reasonably just and generous in their use of the credit system, it is well known that many of them enrich themselves like the most extortionate moneylenders at the expense of all the poor and comparatively poor people in their district. The latter—especially when they are outworkers—are encouraged to buy goods, which they would never dream of taking if they had to pay cash down for them instead of owing the money. “One priest,” writes Miss Martindale, “informed us that he had felt obliged to strongly denounce the truck system from the altar, because it was so prevalent in his parish. He stated that it was useless for more than one girl in a family to have a knitting-machine, because the larger income thus obtained consisted only of draperies and useless fineries. Coin was not given for wages, and as several of the employers did not deal in flour or meal, these goods, which were necessities, were not given in lieu of coin.” Miss Martindale interviewed 154 outworkers in the course of her inquiries into the truck system, and in 104 instances truck was admitted, in 48 cases it was denied. It is all the more amazing to find Mr W. J. D. Walker, the Industrial Adviser and Inspector to the Irish Congested Districts Board,

when giving evidence last year before the Select Committee of the British House of Commons on Home Work, saying, in regard to the Donegal outworkers, that "there is not very much truck, and I do not think myself that they are badly treated in that way." Miss Martindale shows clearly that the credit system is often worked in such a way as to be merely truck in disguise.

Some of the shopkeepers supply only their own customers and debtors with sprigging and knitting work; at least, they give all the best paid work to their own customers. Sometimes, in these shops payment money is handed over the counter, but it must be handed back at once—all or nearly all of it—for no more outwork will be given to those who take their money away with them. "Continually," declares Miss Martindale, "we were told that unless the wages were left at the shop no work would be given."

Miss Whitworth, a colleague of Miss Martindale's, gives an account of an interview she had with a dispensary nurse who put the matter in a nutshell. "All the agents round here have shops," said the nurse, "and they will only give out the best work to customers; in fact they want you to leave all your money in the shop. Now, only yesterday a girl came to me and said: 'You're doing sprigging for Mr A., and you'll have to leave all your money with him, for he has said he's going to give out no more work to a sewer unless she gives the money back to him.' I said,

‘I’ll spend my money where I like,’ but you see I’m not dependent on the sprigging, but the poor folk who are have to spend it all at the agent’s shop. There’s many a poor mother and girl who have to buy articles they don’t want, and have no money for what they want for other things.”

I know that optimists will argue that the out-workers of Donegal are at least better off than they were before the cottage industries were introduced among them. This may be true enough, but it does not alter the fact that a great number of these workers are being most flagrantly injured both in pocket and in character. There is nothing that saps the independence of average human beings to a greater degree than to deprive them of the right to take their earnings into their own hands and to spend them as they will. The Irish Agricultural Organisation Society and Sinn Féin have done something to arouse public opinion against the gombeen man, and, the former at least with its co-operative credit banks, to make him a less maleficent figure in Irish rural life.

While I am on the subject of the Irish workers, it may not be out of place to mention the fact that no body of the people of Ireland serves its ideals more faithfully than they. In Belfast you will find the sturdiest Orangemen and the sturdiest Socialists as well as the sturdiest Nationalists among the working classes. So far as I have seen, I believe they are more capable of absorption in political ideas—ideas apart from all thought

of self-interest—than any other class in Ireland. Many of them gamble and many of them drink, and some of them beat their wives, as is the custom in civilised countries, but these are the bad examples. There is a radical soundness in the Irish working people, a belief in principle, a generosity of purpose, which will be invaluable to any leader who can give them a great cause to follow. In Belfast, Cork, and elsewhere, great numbers of the most intelligent of them are at present turning with hope to a kind of international Socialism. I do not think this tendency will continue long, however, for the workers are too quick-witted not to see that international brotherhood is meaningless except as a brotherhood of free nations. Some of the Orange workers in Belfast have already come to see the necessity of a national basis for any real progress, industrial, social or intellectual.

What the new sort of Orangeman is learning by thinking out, the Limerick labourer knows by instinct. Collectors for the Gaelic League funds in Limerick tell me that nowhere are they so sure of a generous reception as in the houses of the workers in the poor parts of the city. A collector told me of one instance where he had begun with the usual remark, "I suppose you believe in the Irish language revival?" and a working-man had replied, "And why the hell wouldn't I?" as though it were an insult even to put the question to him. This, he said, was



MUD COTTAGE NEAR DUBLIN.

a somewhat forcible expression of the spirit he had found general among the working people of the city.

Before I close this chapter I should like to mention yet another fact—realised by only a very few people—with regard to the working-classes in Ireland. It is that, greatly as the population of Ireland has declined in recent years, the numbers of the workers engaged in the manufacturing industries has decreased in an even greater proportion. Between the census of 1881 and that of 1901 the principal manufacturing industries of Ireland, in so far as they afforded a means of livelihood to the population, decreased by 17 per cent., while the population itself decreased by only—I use the word comparatively—13.8 per cent. In the flax and linen industry, for instance, which is always held up as a model of prosperity, the number of persons employed decreased during the twenty years mentioned from 92,650 to 75,100. In the leather trades the number of workers went down from 30,766 to 19,891. The iron and steel industry, which includes shipbuilding, is the only industry of any size which has given increased employment. Since the last census the record of the woollen trade has probably improved as a result of the industrial revival, but even here the loss during twenty years has hardly been made up yet.

I must apologise for putting so many figures into this chapter. I decided, however, that they

might carry conviction with many readers who would be inclined to dismiss statements of facts which had no warrant but my own observation as worthless. Besides, these figures have something of novelty in a book about Ireland. Most people who write books about Ireland seem to set out with the assumption that Ireland is an exclusively agricultural country, and their figures are nearly all concerned with either land or education. As a result the Irish working-man has been unduly ignored, and very little public light has been thrown upon his circumstances.

CHAPTER XV

SINN FÉIN : THE NEW NOTE IN POLITICS

EVERY one who comes to Irish politics from the outside, seems to find them a little difficult to understand. This perplexity, indeed, is not unknown among the Irish people themselves. The reason is simple enough. Logically, there are only two schools of Irish politics—the Nationalist and the Unionist. Logically, the Nationalist believes that Ireland has an inherent right to be governed by the Irish people in the interests of Ireland. The logical Unionist, on the other hand, believes that England has an inherent—or, at least, an adherent—right to govern Ireland in the interest of either Ireland or herself—it never seems to be precisely set forth which. This being so, it is clear that the dividing line in Irish politics ought to fall between those who believe in Ireland's right to be a nation, and those who believe in Ireland's fate to be an English province or shire.

Ireland, unhappily, is not inhabited to more than a comparatively small extent by logical Unionists and Nationalists—pro-Ireland men and pro-England men. Outside the ranks—perhaps, even inside the ranks—of the Sinn Féin party, it

is a sufficiently common thing to find a Nationalist with a touch of Unionism in his political faith ; and, as for Unionists, the logical worshipper of England and despiser of Ireland is becoming more and more rare, and we find Unionists breaking out into Nationalist enthusiasms in all directions, falling in with here the Devolutionist proposals of Lord Dunraven and his fellow-landlords, here with Sir Horace Plunkett's co-operative schemes, and here with the language or industrial revival. Thus, while the logical extremes of Unionism and Nationalism are as wide apart as the poles, the moderate, or middle, men of both parties are becoming more and more indistinguishable from each other. It would sometimes be a quite pardonable accident to mistake a moderate Nationalist for a moderate Unionist, and the other way about.

The Sinn Féin policy may be described as at once the most extreme and the most moderate form of Nationalism. It is the most moderate because it aims at uniting Irishmen of all creeds and classes on a common platform—or a progressive series of common platforms—for Irish ends. Sinn Féin meets the Unionist, who will not consent to work for the political independence of Ireland, with the question : “ Well, but even if you do not believe in helping Ireland to be politically self-reliant, is that any reason why you should not desire to see her intellectually self-reliant, industrially self-reliant, economically

self-reliant ? ” Recognising that many men and women are Unionists from patriotic motives, it says to them : “ Show your Unionism at election times as much as you like, but be sure to remember to show your patriotism on other occasions by helping Ireland on the path to intellectual loveliness, to economic health, to industrial independence.” Realising that Ireland’s health and wealth depend on Unionist manufacturers, county councillors, Poor Law guardians, school-masters, clergymen, farmers, artisans, labourers, journalists, doctors and shop-keepers, no less than on Nationalist manufacturers, county councillors, Poor Law guardians, school-masters, clergymen, farmers, artisans, labourers, journalists, doctors and shop-keepers, it reminds men of all classes, creeds and parties that they have a common country to serve, and stresses the points upon which they may agree rather than the points upon which they must disagree.

Thus it calls upon the Irish manufacturer to use Irish materials as far as is possible both in the wares he makes and in the wares he buys. It expects, for instance, that the manufacturer of caps will not only make these of Irish cloth and Irish thread, but that in his advertisements and correspondence he will use Irish paper and the work of Irish printers, and that his factory will be built of Irish material. To those who sit on public bodies and have the spending of public money it appeals to give

a preference in their contracts to Irish contractors and Irish manufacturers, and, where doctors or nurses or employees of any sort are wanted, to people with a knowledge of the Irish language. It arranged last year for a conference of Poor Law Unions, at which standard regulations might be agreed upon concerning all food-stuffs, medicines, dressings and so forth required in workhouses and infirmaries, in order that at least preferential treatment might be guaranteed to Irish contractors. Similarly, clergymen and schoolmasters are urged to give the teaching of the Irish language, Irish history and Irish literature its due place in the schools, and if an organ is required in a church or a billiard table in a young man's society, an effort is made to see that the organ and the billiard-table shall be of Irish manufacture.

"Burn everything that comes from England," was Dean Swift's advice to the Irish people in the eighteenth century, "except the people and the coals." And this is the most militant expression of the Sinn Féin policy on its industrial side at the present moment. Sinn Féin supports the industrial revival both as a non-political and as a political movement—one of those necessary paradoxes in human affairs. "Buy Irish goods because they are Irish," it says non-politically to all Irish men and women who desire to see their country prosperous. "Buy Irish goods because they are not English, and, if you cannot get Irish goods, buy French or

German or American, or indeed any goods in the world rather than English. Do so as long as England refuses to keep the terms of the Renunciation Act of 1783, in which she laid it down 'that the right claimed by the people of Ireland to be bound only by laws enacted by his Majesty and the Parliament of that Kingdom is hereby declared to be established, and ascertained for ever, and shall at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable'"—such is the message of Sinn Féin, considering the industrial revival as a political weapon.

Sinn Féin, indeed, stands for both nationality and politics, and its chief wisdom is to be found in its recognition of the fact that nationality is a much bigger thing than politics. Its policy will certainly put the convinced Unionist in a very awkward position during the next few years, for, of course, much as the Unionist may be inclined to buy an Irish pair of boots or a packet of Irish envelopes with the object of helping Ireland, he is strongly disinclined to buy an Irish pair of boots or a packet of Irish envelopes with the result of boycotting England. And the irony of his position lies in that fact that, when he wishes to help Ireland, he cannot help agreeing with the Sinn Féin Nationalists in conduct, however much he may disagree with them in regard to some of the motives of their conduct.

The Unionist dilemma was made manifest in a

trivial way in a letter that appeared in one of the Unionist papers some three years ago. Sinn Féin, out of its versatile and inventive energy, has set on foot a temperance propaganda, which aims, not only at making Irish men and women good citizens, but at diminishing the revenue that the British exchequer annually draws from Ireland. The Irish drink bill contributes something like five-and-a-half million pounds a year in taxation to the British Treasury, and the Sinn Féin argument is that, if this amount were considerably reduced, Ireland would become a financial loss to England instead of being, as at present, a financial gain, so that England would have yet one more practical reason for letting Ireland go. Seeing the dilemma in which this feature of the Sinn Féin policy would place Irish Unionists, a Nationalist with a sense of humour wrote in to one of the Belfast papers over an aggressively Unionist pseudonym, calling the attention of the readers of the paper to the fact that, now that Nationalists were proposing to drink less and so injure the British Treasury, it behoved loyal citizens to drink more and so help to make the Union pay. Impossible as it may seem, the Unionist paper to which the letter was sent published it, and there was a good deal of laughing among the wise. The incident, of course, is only trifling, but it serves to illustrate the troubles that beset the path of the Unionist, whom the Sinn Féiner acclaims as a Nationalist, will he or nill he, in so far as he helps Ireland by being

sober or chaste, or by buying Irish tobacco or flour, or by doing any good work that benefits his country. Allingham's couplet,

“We're one at heart if you be Ireland's friend,
There are but two great parties in the end,”

is quoted on the cover of *Leabhar na hÉireann*, (*The Irish Year Book*)—the valuable hand-book of facts, figures and theories issued annually by the National Council of Sinn Féin—and this may be taken as the motto and central principle of Sinn Féin regarded from the point of view, not of politics, but of nationality.

Sinn Féin, then, recognises in nationality something much more wonderful and even necessary than politics. It holds, however, that nationality must have its political phase and expression, and that no nation ever yet became exuberantly itself, exuberantly a thing of beauty and use in the family of nations, unless it was politically free. Its aim as a political organisation is consequently the independence of Ireland, and as a means to that end it proposes the destruction of the machinery of foreign government in Ireland. Not that it is principally a destructive or war policy. Nationalists are anxious for peace, according to Mr Arthur Griffith, the political thinker of genius who edits “Sinn Féin,” and who originated the Sinn Féin policy in the columns of “The United Irishman,” but before terms of peace can be discussed, he continues, in a phrase reminiscent

of John Mitchel, "England must take her one hand away from Ireland's throat, and her other hand out of Ireland's pocket." In other words, let England observe the terms by which she bound herself in the Renunciation Act of 1783—an Act which has been violated, but which could not even legally and constitutionally be repealed without the consent of the Irish people—and when Ireland's rights have been restored, including, of course, an independent Parliament and exchequer, then ways and means for the future may be made matter for discussion.

I am giving here what I understand to be the official attitude of Sinn Féin on the question of Anglo-Irish relations. Individually, however, many rank-and-file Sinn Féiners put very little trust in legal and constitutional arguments, and claim Ireland's right to be a separate and free nation as a right given by God, without troubling about its other aspect as a right confirmed by England. At the same time, Sinn Féiners of all ways of thinking are agreed to work on a common platform for the independence of Ireland, the minimum interpretation of independence being that which is laid down in the Constitution of 1782 and the Renunciation Act of 1783. Seeing that England is unlikely to consent to observe the terms of 1783 of her own accord, Sinn Féin proposes to make it easier for England to observe them than not to observe them. Ireland, it declares, must no longer send representatives to the British

Parliament to plead to indifferent ears the cause of Irish freedom, since to send representatives to Westminster is not only useless in practice, but is an apparent acquiescence in the terms of the Act of Union. Moreover, it holds that for Irishmen to attend in a foreign Parliament and to take an oath of allegiance to a King, who is no longer the head of a free Irish constitution, but a symbol of foreign conquest, is a lie and an act of national dishonour. Irish politics, according to the Sinn Féin ideal, must not be allowed to rest on a national falsehood, which has already done so much to corrupt and confuse the political thought of the country, but must be placed on the far securer basis of truth and honour and reason.

Hence the central suggestion of political Sinn Féin is the withdrawal of the Irish representatives from Westminster and the setting-up of a *de facto* Irish Parliament in Dublin instead. It is often asked what such a Parliament as this could do, and it is obvious that without the support of the great majority of the people of Ireland in all four provinces it could do very little. Granted this support, however, it could do much towards organising Ireland into an efficient and prosperous nation. It would be a deliberative assembly whose will would have the force of law with those who believed in it. It could frame measures, for instance, for the promotion of education suited to the needs of the Irish people, and these measures would, if the people were behind them, be adopted

by the majority of managers in the primary schools, by the majority of county and urban councils in the technical schools, and by at least one—and perhaps two, for there are those who believe that Protestant Ulster will be overwhelmingly national in another generation—of the universities. It could also encourage a genuine national education system by demanding in all candidates for offices in the pay of public bodies—and these include doctors, engineers, solicitors, nurses, labourers, clerks, librarians, teachers, to name no others—a knowledge of the language and history of Ireland. It could, if necessary, decree the holding of examinations for what would in effect be an Irish National Civil Service. It would have an equal power of organising the country in support of Irish industries and agriculture by means of the local councils and by the appointment of Irish consuls in all the great capitals of the world to look after the interests of the country. The cost of these consuls, it is estimated, would be much less than the present cost of sending Parliamentary representatives to Westminster. Supported by a progressive and industrious Ireland, they might not at first be recognised by the various foreign governments, but would become usefully known to foreign traders and in foreign markets.

Ireland also, according to the Sinn Féiners, requires a National Stock Exchange, where Irish enterprises can be floated; a National Banking System, which will look not with exceptional

suspicion but with exceptional favour on Irish industrial undertakings ; a National Railway System and a National Mercantile Marine, which, instead of hampering and penalising the home producer at every turn, would help and encourage him. There is scarcely any limit, indeed, to what the Irish Parliament could discuss and do. It could do everything except levy taxes with the sanction of the policeman, but the Irish people, like many another people, have shown before now that, when they believe in a principle, they are willing to tax themselves in its support, and it is likely that the Parliament would not be at a loss for money in furtherance of its schemes. One of these schemes, which is worth noticing, by the way, is the institution of national arbitration courts, to which the people could carry their civil suits, thus refusing in so far as is possible to recognise the foreign law-courts.

Obviously, in a country organised on Sinn Féin lines, Irishmen would enter the British army and navy and police force in smaller and smaller numbers. The Irishman who would do so, indeed, would be regarded as was an Italian in the Austrian army in the days of Garibaldi, and could never hope for employment in Ireland in his later years as a pensioner. Until the present day, Irish brains have gone largely into the British Civil Service, and Irish muscle into the British army. It is one of the objects of Sinn Féin to give the brains and muscle of

the country scope and happiness in the service of Ireland.

Sinn Féin thus proposes to build up the Irish nation in spite of the British Parliament and the repeated refusal by the latter of even a small instalment of self-government. It proposes to organise a great national passive resistance movement to oppose the British Government and British influence at every point of vantage they have gained in the country, fiscal, educational, industrial, legal, literary, dramatic, artistic. Ireland, it says, has too long met England on battlefields which England herself has chosen—the floor of the House of Commons and the field of war. Let Ireland now choose the place of battle and let it be the Irish school, the Irish factory, the Irish shop, the Irish home, the Irish farm, the Irish church, the Irish theatre, and Sinn Féiners have no doubt that a new and beautiful individuality will be added to the family of nations.

I have given this prominence to an account of the Sinn Féin policy, not because it has yet captured the majority even of Nationalist Irishmen, but because I think it is the school of Nationalism with which the future will have to reckon. Sinn Féin stands alone in Irish politics as having both a national and a constructive policy. It aims at building a nation to include all the races and creeds and ranks that inhabit Ireland. It recognises the existence of only one race in Ireland—not the Celtic or the Gaelic or the Danish or

the Norman or the Saxon, but the Irish race. It desires the revival of the national language, not because it is the language of the Gael, but because it is the traditional language of the Irish people. As for its inclusion of all creeds and classes, it quarrels with the Nationalism of Daniel O'Connell because at a critical moment it raised a sectarian and not a national standard—the emancipation of the Catholics, not the emancipation of Ireland. Similarly, it holds that Parnell, influenced by Davitt and other leaders of the late seventies and early eighties, committed a national blunder when he allowed a war for the rights of the tenant-farmers to be substituted for a war for the rights of Ireland.

Sinn Féin holds that every time the Irish nation has allowed itself to be seduced from the direct line of national policy into social and sectarian side-issues, it has lost heavily, and it points to the facts of history as a proof that, because the dominant national issue was not settled first, neither the emancipation of the Catholics nor the many laws in relief of the tenant-farmers have been able to prevent Ireland from sinking into a deeper and more general poverty every year. The condition of the country has certainly improved in some respects during the last thirty years or so, but its condition as a nation has changed ever so much for the worse. The population has gone down by over a million. More than a million acres of land have gone out of tillage. Meanwhile, the taxation

per head of an impoverished people has increased from 18s. 9d. in 1871, to £2, 4s. 4d. in 1906.

Sinn Féin holds that, to use an old similitude, the sun of national independence alone can scatter the deep darkness that has been gathering for so long over the land, and it appeals to the gentry, to the industrial and manufacturing classes, to the society Catholic, to the Protestant Ulsterman, to abandon their ancient distrust of the nation and to unite with the rest of the Nationalist forces in setting the national house in order—or rather in building a new national house altogether. It is the first Nationalist movement, I believe, which appeals directly to the middle-classes in the town centres, for its leaders realise that no great national revolution was ever yet accomplished without the aid either of an organised upper-class or of an organised middle-class, or both. It has been criticised, on the other hand, for not appealing with a sufficiently winning voice to the artisans and labourers, but that it has not yet done so is partly due to a laudable determination to keep national solidarity and independence the sole planks in its platform and not to allow its forces to be divided on a class issue. Even social reform, it contends, cannot be radical or of much avail while an unsettled and unsettling national question troubles the air.

Many Irish men and women refrain from being Nationalists, because, they say, Ireland is too small and too poor to be an independent

nation. Here again, the Sinn Féiner offers his answer—in the form of a statistical table this time. In this table, the area, population, revenue and taxation of seven more or less independent European Nations are compared with those of Ireland. The list reads as follows :

Country.	Description.	Area (square miles).	Popula- tion.	Revenue.	Taxation per head.
				£	£ s. d.
Denmark	Independent Kingdom	15,388	2,464,770	4,250,000	1 13 0
Wurtemberg	Suzerain Kingdom	7,534	2,169,486	4,500,000	1 8 6
Greece	Guaranteed Kingdom	25,014	2,433,806	3,000,000	1 3 6
Roumania	Independent Kingdom	50,720	5,936,690	9,250,000	1 4 0
Sweden	Independent Kingdom	172,876	5,513,644	8,800,000	1 13 6
Norway	Independent Kingdom	124,129	2,240,032	5,500,000	1 12 6
Switzerland	Independent Republic	15,976	3,315,443	4,600,000	1 7 6
IRELAND		32,531	4,391,543	9,753,500	2 4 4

Mr George A. Birmingham, the Irish novelist and publicist, has declared that “The Sinn Féin Policy”—the pamphlet from which I have taken the above figures—is the most remarkable statement of political thought published in Ireland since the days of the Revolutionists, or Rebels, of the end of the eighteenth century. Certainly, Sinn Féin has brought intellect, imagination and constructive ideas into Irish politics to a degree unparalleled since the time of Davis, Mitchel, Lalor, and the Young Irelanders. The present century will see the triumph of one of two policies in Ireland. One of these policies is Unionism, the Unionism of Lord Londonderry, and Mr Walter Long, and Mr C. A. Pearson. The other—the more honourable one—is the policy of Sinn Féin.

CHAPTER XVI

POLITICS AND GATHERINGS

THE history of Irish politics, on the whole, apart from the question whether they have always been directed along the wisest channels, seems to me to reflect a good deal of credit on the character of the Irish people. It shows them not to be a fickle people, as they are often called, but to be a race determinedly bent upon reaching a more or less definite goal. The Nationalist Irish have changed policies frequently enough, but they never yet would have much to do with a policy unless it came to them as in some way a furtherer of national liberty. Similarly, the Orange Irish would never have anything to do with a policy which did not present itself to them as in some way a furtherer of religious liberty. The Orange farmer has again and again sacrificed his interests as a farmer before the fair figure of religious liberty, or something got up in imitation of it. "I wouldn't let them change the King's oath anyway," an Orangeman of this class said to me some years ago, when the question of the compulsory sale of land was raging, and I am sure he would rather remain for ever in bondage to the landlords he hates than

see agrarian freedom purchased by the concession of a little politeness to his enemy the Pope. The Nationalist worker in the towns has at all times been equally ready to sacrifice his own immediate interests to his ideal or dream.

I do not mean that, politically speaking, the Irish are a race of saints or martyrs. I mean simply that there is a vein of political idealism running through their nature, and that green banners and orange banners rather than any materialistic passions have given to Irish politics such dignity of spirit and continuity as it possesses. The leaders on both sides may at times have fallen short of the best, but the rank and file of the people have, I think, again and again shown their capacity for daring and unselfish courses. Their daring and unselfishness, it may be added, have been largely wasted owing to the fact that the first necessity of national vitality, the national language, was until lately forgotten in their battles.

The Irishman is born with an interest in politics as he is born with an interest in religion. If at the present moment he seems to be apathetic and bewildered, it is because he has reached a transition point, and is reconsidering the formulæ which have expressed his political principles for so long. Some people may imagine they see a decadence in Irish politics. And a decadence there is. Agrarian politics are decaying, and Orange politics are decaying. Side by side with the decadence, however, a renaissance is going on. A new element of

nationality is slowly entering into both Nationalist and Orange politics and transforming them. The decadence is in reality a sign of growth.

Many of the older people, who took part in the agrarian struggle now in its last phases, seem to be utterly weary of politics. The failure of Parliamentary agitation to win the smallest measure of Home Rule has left them with the sensations of people who have been badly disillusionised. To talk to them, you would think that Nationalist Ireland had lost both its self-confidence and its self-consciousness. "What is the use of struggling any more?" these people say in effect. "We're beaten, so let us save what we can from the wreck. Let English royalties visit us and bring money into the country. Let regiments of soldiers come and take up their quarters in our towns, so that we can at least make something by selling them food and drink. Let the Government help us with our land, help us with industries, help us in all times and in all places. Let them make some of us J.P.'s, and give our sons jobs, and we'll be content, or, at least, we'll learn to keep quiet."

This is the voice, I may say, of the dying, not of the living, Ireland. It is a voice, however, which is audible in so many parts of the country that some people may be misled into thinking that Ireland is really so weak and demoralised that it is ready to sell everything in which it once believed for Government doles. The decadence of agrarian politics is discernible in nothing more clearly than

in the transformation of the boycott from an instrument of unselfishness to an instrument of selfishness. The boycott, as a national means to a national end, is of course as tolerable a thing as any system of police you will find the world over. It is a means of expressing the organised sense of justice of the people in an unfree country, just as the law and police are a means of expressing the organised sense of justice of the people in a free country. It is in itself no more shocking to the moral sense to see an evil-doer punished by the honourable sort of boycotters than it is to see him punished by a judge, jury and policemen. It is obvious, however, that the system of boycott, like the police system, is capable of being abused and perverted into a system of extreme tyranny. The personal boycott for personal ends is a crime against Nationalism as it is against morals, and where it exists, it is the result of the entrance of selfish men into politics, and of their capture of the local political machine for their own purposes. If the police were under popular control instead of being the soldiers of a foreign conquest—"saigh-diúrí dubha" (black soldiers) is the Irish name for them in some places—the people would help them in putting down this as every other sort of crime. So long as the police stand for the perpetuation of foreign government, however, thousands of people would regard it as the greatest of all crimes to give them any aid, no matter what the circumstances—even, say, if it were a question of the conviction

of a man guilty of poisoning fish or some equally unpleasant deed.

I am not here going to discuss the constitution of the United Irish League, the Irish Unionist Alliance, the Devolutionists, the Imperial Home Rule Association, the Northern Union, the Socialists, and the other political bodies in the country. That would involve an amount of exposition and criticism quite beyond the scope of this book. I have already given an outline of Sinn Féin, the newest of the political ideals, which will have an official daily paper of its own by the time the present volume is in print. My main point in this chapter, however, is to stress the fact that, in spite of the selfishness which sometimes characterises agrarian politics, in spite of the frequent abuse of the boycott, in spite of the occasional success of men of poor principles in gaining control of the local machine, the mass of the people have usually taken their politics with an honourable seriousness. Education has been at so low a level in the country that political thought has not been so common as political sincerity, with the result that the people have often mistaken party machines for political realities, and have stood by them with a firmness worthy, as the saying is, of a better cause.

This loyalty to party often springs out of a fine desire for unity, for many people seem to think that variety of political ideals is permissible in every country in the world except Ireland. The

younger men are beginning to see that the unity of patriotism is one thing, and the unity of a party machine another.

Ideas are becoming more and more insistent in the political atmosphere, and audiences can no longer be made enthusiastic by a windy use of green and orange words to the extent which used to be the case. The mob-orator is now looked on in most places as a comic character, and the very vocabulary of public speech is changing. The old sort of orators are still occasionally loosed on the land, of course, but their exaggerated words now fall flat where they used to be applauded as though they had a meaning. The practical, critical speaker is listened to in a tenser silence than any of them, and no man in Dublin gets so attentive a hearing as Mr Arthur Griffith, when he is expounding in a quiet, unemotional voice some subject like the financial bearings of the connection with England.

Public meetings and processions seem to be rapidly losing ground in Ireland as a method of expressing political enthusiasm. I think this is only a temporary change. It is a reaction against a kind of politics which depended too much on the demonstrative enthusiasm of the crowd, and too little on the silent enthusiasm of the individual. I confess I like the meetings and processions: the people, I believe, have a natural genius for them. I like the green and gold and orange and purple of the huge banners as they

come floating up the road in the wind, with the drums beating and the bands crashing out warlike music. Sometimes the portraits of O'Connell, of Emmet, of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, of William of Orange, of Martin Luther, are less than beautiful in detail, but they have a splendid insolence of colour that mixes well with the movement and enthusiasm of huge crowds.

The most enthusiastic gatherings nowadays have nothing to do with politics, but are the *feiseanna*, or festivals, organised in country places in connection with the language revival. Hither come the troops of the politicians behind their banners and their bands, but hither, too, come the scholars, the singers, the dancers, the whistlers, the story-tellers, the fiddlers, the young men and maidens, the well-dressed children, with new banners in an old tongue rising from among them. The Gaelic League crowd, one feels, is a crowd which never took much public part in affairs before. It is a crowd, not enamoured of surface catchwords, but with the secrets of vitality in its quick, pleasant eyes. In no crowd in Ireland is there so much equal talk and laughter between the sexes. In no crowd in Ireland is there the same almost merry devotion to the real unity of nationhood—the unity at which Wolfe Tone aimed when he desired that Irishmen should no longer be known merely as Protestants, Catholics and Dissenters, but that these dividing names should all give way in national affairs to the more

generous denomination of Irishman. There are narrow people, foolish people, to be found at Gaelic gatherings as at all other public gatherings in the Christian world. But the Gaelic League itself is neither narrow nor foolish. It contains within its ranks landlords and farmers, Catholic priests and Protestant ministers, employers and labourers, Christians and agnostics, and is now so firmly rooted in the imagination and conscience of the people that the movement for which it stands cannot in the ordinary course of events fail in the achievement of its object—which is to make Ireland a living country and to give it a personality among the nations.

No less characteristically Irish than the political gatherings and the feiseanna are the lively, jostling, shouting throngs that one sees at fairs and regattas, and at important hurling and football matches. Here on great days you will see a little village of booths grow up on the roads or in the fields, and men with roulette tables, men with the three-card trick, men with trick-in-the-loop, men with sticks and rings, men with checkered cloths on which many abortive pennies are thrown, men with white mice for telling fortunes, tumblers, cord-escapers, ballad-singers, and fiddlers with their tunes come together as if from the four corners of the world. A blind beggar, his white head bare in the sunny breeze, will plant himself in the fair-way of the thronging traffic, crying with a noble persuasiveness: "A penny for a poor

blind man, for the love of God! A penny for the love of God! God knows you won't miss it! God knows you won't miss it! It isn't much I'm asking. It isn't much I'm asking. A penny for a poor blind man, for the love of God! A penny for the love of God!"

Surrounded by a crushing circle of people, a man and woman will be standing, tough-looking customers, yelling ballads into each other's faces. Sometimes it is the rule for them to hold their green or white ballad-sheets in front of them as they sing, but you need not be surprised if the ballad-sheet in their hands is upside-down, or if it contains quite a different ballad from the one they are singing. They sing a duet in unison—a duet without a pause from start to finish, for the man will probably let the woman sing the last half-line of the verse by herself in order that he may fill his lungs so as to be able to bellow out the beginning of a new verse from his twisted face before the last note of the old has died a painful death on the woman's lips. It is difficult to convey the exact impression of this racing kind of singing. The Irish tramp-singer is heir to the old tunes, but he is heir, I imagine, only to the battered relics of the old methods of singing. He moans, he skirls, he yells; he would wake the dead with his uproar. Sometimes he will give you the ancient ballad of "Robert Emmet"—"Poor Robert Emmet, the darling of Ireland." Sometimes, if there are no police near, you may even get him to sing you

“The Peeler and the Goat”—a song putting ridicule upon the police to the merriest tune. Or, perhaps, he will let you have a new and topical ballad of his own. Here, for example, is the beginning of a ballad on the taking of the census, sung in the streets of Dublin before ballad-singing had become a declining trade :

“*Oh, they’re taking of the census
In the country and the town !
Have your children got the maisles ?
Are your chimbleys tumbling down ?*”

Lady Gregory quotes a ballad of a different sort, made during the South African war in honour of the Irishmen who fought on the side of the Boers. One beautiful verse runs :

“*Oh, mother of the wounded breast !
Oh, mother of the tears !
The sons you loved and trusted best
Have grasped their battle spears.*”

Recently the air has been noisy with ballads about the old age pensions and their good and dire results. I came upon no less than three of these in a single week. Of the best of them, unfortunately, I did not get a copy, but I think one of the others may be worth quoting because of its characteristic qualities—a few verses of it, at least, for it is too long to give in full. After three introductory verses, it runs on like this :

“*Some people used deny their age—
You often could them hear—
They would nearly strike you with their stick
If you said they were seventy year.*”

Now they are running to the parish books,
They do not care about wind or cold,
And they tell the priest now if he can,
To try and make them old.

“I met an old man the other day,
Who was both old and weak.
He says ‘I’ll try and calculate
How to spend five bob a week.
There is one and ninepence for my lodging,
For to lay my poor head down,
And ninepence for tobacco,
That is the first half-crown.

“ ‘Then there is sevenpence for sugar,
And sevenpence for tay :
Tenpence-ha ’penny worth of bread,
That’s three-halfpence every day.
Threepence halfpenny for new milk—
Our feeding won’t be great :
And I’ll have twopence for Sunday for
To buy a piece of mate.

“ ‘But I think I’ll get married to
Some old woman in the town.
For I am told by young and old
She’ll have a half-a-crown.
Then we’ll take a cabin of our own,
Where I can rest my bones,—
Unless that she’d go on the spree
And hammer me with stones.’ ”

This song incidentally gives some idea of a poor man’s budget. It also contains in the last two lines a suggestion of the grim sort of humour in which Irish ballad-singers, whether in English or in Irish, seem every now and then to indulge in the

intervals of idealism. In the closing verse we have a sardonic and ludicrous picture of old men and women militant—a picture of a kind which is more typical perhaps of the humour of tramps than of the humour of settled people. The poet observes:—

“What a splendid regiment they would be,
 If it happened they would be called in,
 With their hand-sticks and their crutches,
 The old women and old men,
 They would beat the stones and ditches,
 And pretend they were not so weak,
 And they would fight with all their might
 For this five bob a week.”

The singing and selling of ballads like this is a great business in country towns where sports of any kind are being held. Often the singers, instead of making a collection for themselves, sell their ballads to the onlookers after each song—a transaction which gives country people a pleasant feeling that they are getting something for their money. Nothing could be more amusing than the rapidity with which the song is brought to an end as the time for selling draws near. The traditional Irish way of ballad-singing has no top-notes or lingering graces at the close of the song. The last few words, indeed, are not sung at all, but the voice suddenly drops from impassioned music to the ordinary tones of conversation, and the ballad ends like a hurried comment on the weather, as the singer moves off to collect his reward.

I have perhaps given a disproportionate amount

of space to the ballad-singer, but to me he is always the centre of the fair or the festival which he attends. He seems to link them to the fairs and festivals of other centuries: he is the past in rags. A new style of singer has unfortunately begun to go about the country with words and airs from the music-halls. The music-hall words may be as wise as the ballad-singer's, but they are not related to Irish earth in the same way. Besides, there is all the difference in the world between the new tunes and the old. There is as much difference between them as between giggling and natural laughter, as between maudlin sentimentalism and the passion of despair. An Irish crowd at once loses half its meaning—for it loses all its significance to the memory—when the banjos troop in, and the home-coming of Bill Bailey and the history of the man who was afraid to go home in the dark, take the place of the ancient interests.

I remember, one twelfth of July, if I may be allowed to shift the subject a little, hearing a band in a great Orange procession playing "What oh, she bumps!" It killed the spirit of the procession for me, as it would kill the spirit of a church if the organist suddenly struck up with a tune of this sort as a voluntary. For Orangeism, like the fairs, owes much of what beauty it possesses to the traditional tunes; and "The Boyne Water," "The Orange Lily," and "The Protestant Boys" are among the most joyous and exhilarating airs I know.

CHAPTER XVII

MANNERS

IRISH manners appear at their best, I think, in connection with hospitality. The tradition of hospitality is an old one in Ireland, and according to the Brehon law, people in the higher stations were bound to entertain guests "without asking any questions." There were besides some four hundred guest-houses scattered throughout the country in the early days of Christianity, and the master of each of these was supposed to keep his kitchen-fire constantly burning and joints boiling in his cauldron in readiness for the arrival of strangers. This may seem to have very little to do with the home life of ordinary Irish men and women of the present time, but it must be remembered that the ordinary Irish men and women of the present time are the representatives of an old aristocracy fallen upon evil times. Many foreign elements, many elements of a ruder sort, have entered into the composition of the nation in the last several hundred years. But there still survives an ancient aristocratic leaven among the people—an aristocratic leaven of hospitality and good manners.

It is a question whether the Irish landlord or

the Irish peasant is the more distinguished for his hospitality. The peasant has often not much to give you, but in unspoiled places he will likely give you all he has. It is well in some parts of the country not to take a full meal in the houses of the poor if you are a passing stranger, for they will accept no money for what they give you, and you will go away with a conscience that tortures you for having robbed the needy. Even in those places where the spirit of hospitality has been to some degree commercialised, you will come upon unexpected hospitable turns in the behaviour of the people. Thus, as I was walking with a friend along a lonely road in the west one parching day, we called in at a public-house, which looked something like an ordinary farmhouse, and tried to get some lemonade. The house was out of temperance liquors, however, and, as we refused to take claret, the girl in charge of it offered us some milk. We took good drinks of this, and then asked how much we had to pay for it. But the girl said "There's no charge," and would take nothing, though the house was a licensed public-house and the sales of drinks must have been small.

This is typical of the desire to be hospitable that one finds nearly everywhere. Ireland is, as a result of this, an awkward country in which to travel. It is extremely difficult to know when you will be insulting people by offering money, and when you will be insulting them by not

offering it. The very man who brings you your drink in a public-house, even in Dublin or Belfast, may take a drink with you, but he will not take money from you. The waitresses in the restaurants, except in the more fashionable and cosmopolitan Dublin tea-shops, look for no tips. Obligingness, indeed, without money and without price, is a national virtue. On the other hand, let an Irishman once get accustomed to accepting money for small services, and he will run to the opposite extreme from hospitality in his greediness. The pennies and twopences with which so many people tip their way through London would be despised in Ireland. You could not overwhelm the tip-taking sort of Irishman, no matter how large your dole. The tourist-corrupted districts, it may be said, are very often extremely poor places, and visitors are looked on as being a sort of millionaires to whom giving out money is as easy as breathing. Personally, I am not sorry that the weather and the money-demands between them should scare away a good many tourists from Ireland. Ireland is a good country for genuine travellers, but the tripper will be far merrier and more comfortable out of it. And I hope it will always remain so.

When I call the Irish a hospitable people, moreover, I do not mean that they are open-lipped and open-hearted for every stranger. As a matter of fact, outside the tourist districts, they are likely to be shy and reticent unless they know who you are. Thackeray made this a

cause of complaint against them. "In the various cabins I have entered," he declared, writing of his journey from Clifden to Westport, "I have found talking a vain matter; the people are suspicious of the stranger within their wretched gates, and are shy, sly, and silent. I have commonly only been able to get half-answers in reply to my questions, given in a manner that seemed plainly to intimate that the visit was unwelcome." Yet the district of which Thackeray is here writing is one of the most hospitable in Ireland.

In some places, any one who meets you on the road will have a greeting for you. Elsewhere, they will stare at you without expression, or look in front of them as though your presence were a matter of no importance to them.

The road-greetings in Ireland vary from place to place. In the Irish-speaking districts of Connacht and elsewhere the usual greeting is "Go mbeannuighidh Dia dhuit" (God bless you), and the answer, "Dia 's Muire dhuit" (God and Mary bless you). In some parts of Munster they say, "Bail ó Dhia ort" (A blessing from God on you), and in Donegal they say simply, "Lá breágh" (Fine day), or if it is after twelve o'clock in the day, "Trathnóna maith" (Good evening); for through a great part of Ireland, evening technically begins after midday. "Good-night," too, is used almost as freely upon meeting people as upon parting from them. In the English-speaking districts, the traditional southerner is

supposed to say "That's a fine day," and to be answered, "It is, glory be to God," while the northerner, pushing past in the rain with his coat-collar about his ears, grunts out "Saft!" and is answered "Ay!" It is not always raining in the north, however, nor is the northerner always so pessimistic and monosyllabic as tradition makes him out. A common greeting with him is, "Morrow, boy," if he meets a man or a boy, and the answer is "Morrow."

The Irishman has a great reputation for politeness, and I think this is deserved. In the land-owning and professional classes, there is a fine spirit of chivalry towards women, and in the towns you will see proportionately fewer women standing in the trams and trains than in English cities. The Belfast trams have, or used to have, a rather startling notice painted up on them: "The life-boat rule is, women and children first."

Politeness in the country places is very different from town politeness. The poorer people are not nearly so much given to raising their caps as is often stated. In many parts, the ordinary man does not think of taking off his cap to anybody of the other sex, and in the kitchens and even parlours of farm-houses, you will often see the men sitting with their hats or caps on their heads, no matter who is present. This, of course, is only a convention, and politeness expresses itself in various ways in various places. Even where the conventions permit a man to go through a door

in front of a woman, and where they have not taught him the different uses of the knife and fork, or the side of a plate at which a tea-cup should stand, you will find the essentials of politeness among the people—kindliness, ease, and the spirit of equality.

There is very little boot-licking in Ireland, on the one hand, and very little brow-beating pretentiousness on the other. There are different classes among the people, but not different castes, as it always seems to me there are in England. Master and servant can talk together with something like ease and intimacy, and there is no deep gulf dividing the children of the rich from the children of the poor, save in a few narrow cliques in the towns.

Perhaps a chapter on Irish manners ought to contain some reference to the “stage Irishman”—the boisterous buffoon, who is to be met with in the music-halls, and occasionally in real life where it has been influenced by the music-halls. The “stage Irishman,” it may be said at once, does not exist at all in Irish country places. The country people sometimes accept him with amusement on the concert stage, but even here they have lately taken to hissing him as an offence and a bore.

He was in origin a travesty of an Anglicised sort of Irishman, who was as absurd a sight for the gods as an Anglicised Egyptian, and whose manners were no more like real Irish manners

than the pigeon English which is to be heard in China is like the real English language. His shouts, his clownishness, his clothes, his jokes, have no more resemblance to their Irish counterparts than the Frenchman of a London musical comedy has to a Frenchman of Paris. Even the bulls he makes are only a caricature of the real Irish bull—that turn of speech which, as the Somerville-Ross collaboration has insisted, is by no means an idiocy, but is often a paradoxical and impressionistic method of conveying an idea in itself beyond the reach of ordinary statement. The impressionistic sort of bull is, I think, a peculiarly Irish or Anglo-Irish form of wit. The idiotic sort of bull is quite another thing, and, like malapropisms, is common in all countries among uneducated people who use words rashly.

The “stage Irishman” gives us a caricature of one undoubtedly Irish quality—what we might call the fighting quality. Irishmen are certainly pugnacious, as a race. They take a real joy in the battle. The faction fights which used to make the fairs lively were a national institution. One of the new Irish writers somewhere defends these fights as the comparatively modern remnants of the old heroic battles. They were a strenuous sort of sport, and it is a good thing that they have disappeared, but I do not think they were as brutal as the old-fashioned sort of boxing, and probably they were not always more dangerous than American football. I have often

seen a small boy in Belfast, when another eyed him as he passed, stopping and saying: "Who are you looking at?" and the other answering: "Do you want to pick a fight?" and I think these casual challenges spring from some instincts of a fighting ancestry. Riots and faction-fights equally are symptoms of a virile fighting spirit running to waste.

Again, if you compare an Irishman and an Englishman when under the influence of liquor, you will notice that in a great number of cases the Irishman becomes dramatic and pugnacious and wants to show off, while the Englishman is anxious to get away to some quiet place where no one will be witness of his shame. As a consequence, when an Irishman is drunk, everybody knows it: when an Englishman is drunk, as few people as possible are allowed to know it. This, of course, is only a generalisation with a thousand exceptions. It may seem a trivial generalisation, but it is not without significance. The fact that a number of Irishmen in their cups are so much more vividly drunk than a similar number of Englishmen in a similar condition has impressed the imagination of the world, and led people to conclude that, comparatively speaking, the Irish are a drunken race, whereas, comparatively speaking, they are a sober race, drinking less, I believe, than either the Scotch or the English.

Obliging and at the same time individualistic to an almost quarrelsome point, generously hospitable

and at the same time thrifty, quick in their emotions and yet not fickle in regard to the things they care about, at once reverent and ruthlessly satirical, hard-working and hard-idling, the Irish people have a thousand paradoxes in their character. There are few things you can truthfully say about them which you cannot as truthfully contradict. They are a people of extraordinary nervous force, which makes their merriment seem merrier than that of other peoples and their despair more desperate, their goodness more saintly and their corruption more corrupt. This nervous energy has fortunately not yet been perverted by industrialism or by religious and political indifferentism. Unless the people follow a determinedly Irish way, however, they will most surely end in drifting away both from their morals and their manners.

Perhaps I cannot put a better end to this chapter than by quoting a letter written to me from Dublin by a lady a few months ago—a letter dwelling upon the obligingness of the people, which I have already mentioned as the central virtue of their manners. She was walking out past Dalkey one day, she wrote, when she put her foot through the braid of her skirt and had to cut it with scissors. “It still kept ripping,” she went on, “and we stopped to search for pins when a little scrubby tramp passed us. He promptly produced a needle with a bit of grey thread in it and offered it to me, and went on his way. I was very grateful and sewed on the braid. The little tramp was

trudging on ahead so we gave chase. When we overtook him, he wanted me to keep the needle, so I had to explain I'd used it and presented it to him again. Wasn't it nice of him? I'm sure Ireland is the only country where a tramp would part with the only useful thing he had to a perfect stranger passing on the road." I am not dogmatically sure of this. But the atmosphere of kindness for which the tramp stood is an atmosphere to which I myself owe so many pleasant nights and days that I can hardly think any praise an exaggeration.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHARACTERS. I.—THE DRIVER

WE did not really want a car. I had gone with a friend to a small town in the west where a fair was being held, and we had no wish to be borne off to look at scenery, but only asked to be let alone to walk up and down and hear ballads and watch fine-looking aged people bargaining about the price of pigs and calves in Irish.

We did not, I repeat, want a car. We had stepped from the train, however, on to the little wind-swept platform, and, as we were the only urban-looking people among the arrivals, the carmen took the matter determinedly out of our hands. We had the force of character to refuse the first of them—a sly, sullen, suspicious old man in a cloth cap, who tried to sell us what appeared to be bits of stones. Then a fellow with the length and the low brows of a guardsman shot across the platform to us. I think we must have lost our heads. Anyhow, we found ourselves, against all our better inclinations, sitting on the narrow edge of his car, and he told us he was going to take us to see “the clift,” which, he declared, “towerists” from all parts of the world swore

was the grandest piece of scenery to be found anywhere.

Luckily, he was a good-natured fellow, with his lanky limbs, his flowing moustaches, and his soldier's brow, and he permitted us to get off at a way-side hotel—or public-house, or hardware shop, or bakery, whichever you like to call it—for a half-hour's lunch.

When we came out again, he was moving agilely about among the crowd of buyers and sellers, his whip towering symbolically and inescapably as a slave-driver's. Having helped us to our seats and pressed a number of rugs in about us, he lay up against his side of the car and battered the pony into a broken trot along a lane of booths and rebellious animals.

He was soon talking volubly in a language that was neither English nor Irish, but was a kind of mixture, I think, that he had invented for himself. He was especially interested in "towerists," and would have talked of nothing else if I had let him.

"There was an English gentleman telling me a while back," he said, leaning insinuatingly over the car, as the talk drifted into semi-political things, "that the Gover'ment means soon to show great favour to Ireland."

"That's an old story, isn't it?" I said.

"Well," he declared confidently, "they tell me it's all coming true at last."

Having evidently observed some turn or feature of loyalty in my countenance, he went on to draw me

a peaceful picture, in which it appeared Congested-districts gold would fall like rain upon his part of the country, and Ireland, out of a grateful heart, would help England with soldiers and with love to retain her eminence among the nations.

I did not want to talk about England, however, for I had just come back from it, and besides I was more interested in the men and women I saw about me than in political theories coloured to suit the tastes of tourists.

A sort of loyalty still kept bobbing up like a Jack-in-the-Box at intervals in his conversation, but he began to talk humanly enough about his own people, their music, their dances, and their journeys to England. Everybody except the infants-in-arms seemed to have been to England—"yes, girls and all, and they came back with their characters, too, thank God, poor things. Would you believe that, now?"

He would like to live in England himself, he said, for it was a warm, comfortable country, but here there wasn't as much as a thorn-bush to protect you from the cold winds that swept down between the hills all through the winter. It was indeed a bare place of heather-coloured hills and grey stones. There were no fences in the fields—fields about as big as a sitting-room—and only a few tumbled stones marked their boundaries. "Though I will say this," he admitted, turning suddenly to the friend who was with me, "that on a fine warm day in June or thereabouts, when

the sun bes shining, it would pay you, ma'am, to be out in your shimmy."

He assured us, too, that, when the workers returned from England, there was great joy in the place, and the cottages were lively with singing and dancing, the boys and girls putting their means together to pay the expenses of a couple of fiddlers. I told him that, if he knew a fiddler anywhere near, we would rather go and hear a tune from him than see the "clift" to which he was jolting us whether we would or no. He declared that it would be a pity for us to miss the "clift," but his face lit up suddenly, and he said that perhaps we would stay at the hotel all night, and he could drive us to the "clift" to-morrow. We said, "Perhaps," but asked to be taken to the fiddler's house in any case.

"Well," said he, "there's Tom the fiddler and Ned living in a house down the road a space, and we'll be able to have a song or a dance, if you'd like that better. Here's the house," he said after a while, pointing to a naked white cottage by the roadside. "If they're at home, we'll have to get in a half-gallon of porter to courage them up a bit. Is Tom the fiddler in?" he roared suddenly at a small dark girl who hesitated on the road-side near the cottage.

The girl looked startled, and was too distant, I think, to hear what he had said.

"Is Tom the fiddler in?" he roared again, a little louder and a little nearer by this time.

"I don't know," the girl seemed to reply in a shrinking voice.

"Go and find out now," he commanded her, "and don't be long. There's a lady and gentleman here that's come over from England to hear him playing."

The girl disappeared for an instant and was back again by the time we had dismounted from the car.

"Tom the fiddler's coming down the field," she announced.

"That's good," he declared, bustling about like a master of ceremonies. "Go in, sir, go in, ma'am. Here," he gave his orders to the girl, "go down to Nora's and bring us a half-gallon of porter—good drink, mind," he added warningly, as he handed her the money I had given him.

Tom the fiddler appeared round the corner of his cottage, walking with the help of a stick and a crutch. He had lost one of his feet, and the stump was bound in black wool. He was a grey, weather-beaten little man of a darkish countenance. He had humour in his eyes, however, and kindness and independence in his firm mouth—a mouth that was in itself a history of suffering. He wore on his head a black tam-o'-shanter.

"Where's Ned?" the driver asked him, uncere-
moniously.

"He's lying in bed," replied Tom slowly, in a voice that seemed as though it hurt him even to talk, while he hobbled towards us. "He's de-

stroyed with pain. I think may-be he's dying." He spoke the words quietly and sadly, taking in our appearance all the time.

Our carman was not for a moment put out.

"Go and tell him to get up," he said. "There's a lady and gentleman here has come a long way to hear him and you playing your music."

The old fellow shook his head, and showed us politely into his house.

"Well, get down your own fiddle, anyway," said the driver, bundling us through the door, and then, as the old man protestingly drew his fiddle from under the bed, and sat down in a hard chair by the fire, our guide continued, turning to us: "This is a poor, decent, honest man that whatever small bit he has to keep between himself and the starvation, he makes it all with that fiddle you see there in his hands before you."

The old man's face gave a little twist of dislike, as he plucked a string and tightened it.

"I glory in it," he said defiantly.

After that he spoke no more English to us.

"Is docha go bhfuil Gaedhilg agat?" (Likely you have Irish?) I said to him out of my scanty stock; and, with a new interest in his face, he said he had, and after that he would talk nothing else.

He would have been glad enough, I think, to talk English on an ordinary occasion, but Irish at the present time seemed to make him feel less like an animal being shown off in a cage and more like a



ANTRIM FARM AND OLD-FASHIONED CART.



human being. It was easy to see that he resented the carman's manner of taking him and his house over, and running them as a sort of peep-show for tourists, and every time the carman said anything to him in English Tom replied stolidly in Irish.

The drink arrived in a jug, and the carman brought down a number of cups and mugs from the dresser at the foot of the bed and filled them. "As clean as if it was meant for the Lord Lieutenant's own table," he commented enthusiastically, having looked into one of them. Before long, a number of girls and children and men wandered into the house, and took their seats on a long bench which stood against the opposite wall.

The driver, with a mug of porter in his hand, made us known to the company as a "lady and gentleman" who had come an incredible number of miles to hear Tom playing the fiddle and to learn Irish—"would you believe that, now?" Having pressed mugs of good porter on the other men—"Have a sup of good porter now with the lady and gentleman"—he took the middle of the floor, which was half earthen and half composed of broken flag-stones.

"I tell you," he said, still with the mug in his hand, and carrying on a running soliloquy, "there's great change and improvement coming in this country. Irishmen have appreciation shown to them now the way they never had before. The English are beginning to find out for themselves that we're good men. And what could they do

without us? Where would they be without Irishmen for soldiers? I hear now the King of England would go down on his bended knees to get fair treatment for the Irish, because he knows he couldn't do without them in time of war."

A pale-haired man with a cap in his hand looked up from the bench where he was crouching.

"Is it true he went to Mass?" he asked.

I said I didn't know.

"I heard he went to Mass," declared the pale-haired man, nodding his head.

"Well now, I'll sing you a song," our guide volunteered, seeing the conversation drifting away from him. "Will I sing it in English or in Irish?"

We said Irish, so he began shouting on the floor, and, at the end of every line of shouting, he would stop not only to translate but to explain to us. It was a song about drowning, and we had all the relations between the dead man and his sweetheart given to us in detail between the lines. The fiddler scraped something like an accompaniment when the song reappeared at intervals, but he seemed to be purposely playing in wrong time. Certainly it was odd that so good a player as he should always contrive not to keep time when the driver happened to be singing, and I am quite sure he was in this way paying the other out for bringing publicity and turmoil into a decent house.

After giving us a song, the driver danced for us,

hopping as lightly as an insect on the broken floor in his thick hob-nailed boots. Swallowing another mug of porter, he sang to us a second time—an English song about an Irish harvester in England, a fight and an arrest by the police. After that, he proposed another dance, and, as the friend who was with me did not feel equal to such a floor and so acrobatic a partnership, he dragged a girl with a black shawl round her head into the middle of the floor, and danced rings round her while she merely shuffled her clumsy boots in a formal self-conscious way.

Everybody in the house was silent and a little shy—everybody except this master of our destinies who made us drink porter or dance or listen to his loud voice according as he had the whim. A few delicate bright-haired children in shawls, who had pattered in on their bare feet, stared at us and the tremendous driver in turns from their wistful blue eyes. One of the men who were present—a man with an underglow of purple in his hair and on his face—sang us a brief wonderful piece of music with Irish words, and brought the beauty of a thousand years ago into the kitchen for a moment; but the driver soon remembered his duties as a twentieth-century provider of amusement, and made the room ring again with the sound of his voice and feet.

While he was singing, I slipped out of the room, feeling that even scenery was better than this. I looked out over the barren heather-

coloured land to the barren purple sea, an odd woman or two bending over the earth at their work in the middle distance, and bringing curious colours into the scheme of things with their flannel petticoats. As I stood there, with the wet, fragrant wind blowing about my forehead, I suddenly heard "God save Ireland" roared from the cottage in a mixture of voices. When it was over, I went in again, as I thought it must be time to go.

"You missed it," the carman exclaimed, striding excitedly over to me and catching my hand. "You missed 'God save Ireland,' sir. We must give you that again now. Now, all join in. It wouldn't be right for us to separate without all taking part in that song."

As we stood around, he raised his arm, and marked time by swinging his cap round his head, and the song went on to the chorus :

"'God save Ireland,' said they proudly,
 'God save Ireland,' say we all ;
 Whether on the gallows high or the battle-field we die,
 Oh, what matter when for Erin dear we fall !'"

"Again," he said, and the absurd business was all gone through once more, the carman contributing nearly all the noise, and the rest of us nearly all the dispiritedness.

"And a good song," he declared, "and we needn't be ashamed of ourselves either, no matter what part of the world we may be in."

I certainly wondered at the man, even if I did not love his methods. I began to see how Ireland must present itself to the foreign visitor—Ireland of the tourist guides—the Ireland of loud loyalty or loud patriotism, whichever you are ready to pay for. Ireland of the realities lay about us, silent, hard-labouring, pondering partly on high heaven and partly on the price of bacon, while the sea fell with a mysterious murmur on the stones and sands of her mysterious shore.

CHAPTER XIX

CHARACTERS. II.—THE MAN OF SECRETS

It is only by accident that I came to visit the grave of Myles the Proud, a hero of the Cromwellian wars, and so had the good luck to fall in with Mr Foley and his singular personality. I was passing through a town in the Irish midlands on my way to a demonstration that was partly political and partly commemorative of Myles's greatest exploit. He had fought side by side with Owen Roe O'Neill, and had won deathless fame by a splendid single-handed fight he had made, like Umslopogaas, against impossible odds. As he was said to be buried in the old churchyard in the town in which I found myself, with half-a-day before me and nothing particular to do in it, I asked a local friend to go with me and show me the place.

It was a place without paths, a nook of ruined walls, and of worn and falling tomb-stones. The ruins of a woman came out of the ruins of a house beside the high, rusted gate of the porch, and unwound chains so that we might enter. Inside, a clear, gloomy silence reigned, impressive as the silence in a forest. It was as though the singing

of birds had never been heard there, or the swish of a scythe, or the noise of a sickle coming suddenly against a stone.

Some of the graves were fairly modern, and there were several vaults belonging to the Protestant county families—peers, colonels, captains, deputy lieutenants, baronets, magistrates, and the rest. Even these seemed to be affected by the spirit of decay, and to have become an assimilated part of the ill-kept grass-grown wilderness. Ourselves, we did not pay much attention to them, but made straight for the little oblong patch where the church had once stood—a patch marked by a considerable fragment of a gable which still lingered on in a sorrowful mantle of ivy, like an aged woman in a shawl sitting without speech by the fireside years after she ought to be in her grave. Somewhere near this, according to tradition, Myles the Proud was buried. As in the case of so many of the Irish heroes, there was no stone or epitaph to mark the exact spot where he lay.

I will be frank, and confess that I am never able to take much pleasure in these personally-conducted visits to famous graves. I do not know what to say, or even what to think, when I am brought to a halt and bidden to look down at the grave of some hero, whose mere name, perhaps, can set my pulses dancing in the solitude of my own room. My imagination stubbornly refuses to walk in dead, far off centuries, while men in

starched collars and Trilby hats are present with their aggressively modern shapes at my side.

Probably, my companion was feeling very much the same sort of dissatisfaction as myself, and it was with a sigh of relief, rather than of reverence, that we turned from our contemplation of what may or may not have been Myles's grave, and made our way back to the churchyard gate.

The stooping woman who had admitted us locked the gate after us with a great rattle of chains. Leaving the dead world behind us, we were stepping down the road on our way back to the hotel, when a piping asthmatic voice hailed us out of nowhere.

"Well, gentlemen, have you been taking a look at the old church?"

We stopped and turned round, and my friend introduced me to a tall, high-shouldered man, very jerky in his movements, and with busybody written all over him. He was a local magnate of some sort—either Clerk of the Workhouse, or verger at the Protestant Church—I do not remember which. Beyond the middle age, he had a not too generous allowance of grey beard, and cheeks that went up so high in his face that they almost buried his little beady eyes out of sight. He appeared as though he might be half-blind, or an albino, or have a squint—his eyes had certainly something the matter with them. Though he wore a pair of black-rimmed spectacles, these hung some way down his nose, and, when he wanted to



CLONBUR—A CONNACHT VILLAGE.

see you, he usually looked over them, not through them. He was dressed in a morning coat of discoloured tweed, which had the air of having been put on hurriedly, carelessly ; and a dusty high hat, round at the top, sat anyhow on his head with a suggestion of absent-mindedness.

Out of politeness my friend told him the errand that had brought us to the churchyard.

"I suppose, Mr Foley," he said, with the spice of compliment that deceives even the cleverest of us, "you know as much about these things as any man in the county. Can you tell us if we were right in looking for Myles the Proud's grave under the gable of the old church?"

Mr Foley, looking like the sun in mid-winter with pleasure, laid his hand on my friend's shoulder, and almost pushed him back to the gate of the churchyard.

"Come and I'll show you," he said in his high voice. "It's lucky you young gentlemen met me. There's nobody could tell you all you want to know about the graves in this yard, and the people that's buried in them, as well as myself." Whereupon he brought a private key out of his pocket, opened the padlock, and ushered us back, willy-nilly, into the haunts of the dead.

My friend threw me a glance as though to warn me that we had let ourselves in for a rather boring experience.

"We haven't much time to spare, Mr Foley," he said deprecatingly ; "but if you would show

us where Myles is really buried we'd be very much obliged to you."

"I'll do that," Mr Foley assured him heartily, walking on ahead with a sort of running motion through the long grass, and halting to take breath as he clambered up each fresh grave-mound. "I'll tell you everything you want to know. Just keep following me."

He came to a sudden pause at the top of a mound, and put his hand on the railing that marked off the grave of a county family.

"Now look at that grave, gentlemen. There's an interesting grave," he said, raising his voice as though he were addressing deaf people. "That's where Colonel Finch-Bellew is buried. You didn't know him, Mr Ward, did you?" he turned to my friend. "I tell you, he was a splendid figure of a man—the splendidest figure of a man ever you saw. He came home with a bad leg from fighting the Boers, and then, just when he had found his health again, his horse fell dead under him while he was out hunting, and that was the end of him. Och, he was a handsome man! You would see him there in his place in the church every Sunday morning as regular as the clock in the town hall, when he would be at the castle. Ay, I knew the Colonel well!"

He lowered his voice, and changing his expression to the very opposite of what it had been, cast a sudden winking glance round us.

"I could tell you a thing about the Colonel would make you laugh," he half-whispered, shaking his head knowingly.

We nodded and said, "Oh!" in an encouraging tone, feeling our interest wakening up at the prospect of scandal.

Mr Foley's expression suddenly changed back again to the deepest solemnity. He fetched a heavy sigh.

"You may say what you like about the landlords," he remarked, as though gently reproving the curiosity which he himself had so cunningly stirred, "but I never met anybody yet with a bad word for the Colonel. Ah, he was a fine, open-handed man—a fine, open-handed, kindly-spoken man was the Colonel!"

After a decent interval, when it became apparent that the story about the dead Colonel was to remain an eternal secret, as far as we were concerned, my friend interrupted Mr Foley in the reverie into which he seemed to have fallen.

"And now, Mr Foley," he said, "as we're rather in a hurry, and it's not fair to be taking up so much of your time, perhaps we had better go on and see where Myles is buried."

Mr Foley, standing with his hands under his coat-tails, twisted round his head inquisitively.

"Myles?" he said, as though he had forgotten the name. "Oh, yes; Myles the Proud. Come this way." And he hurried forward again on his feeble spindle-shanks over the disregarded grave-mounds.

He had not gone very far before he brought us to a stop again to admire a dull rectangular vault roofed with a great slab of stone.

"Now, perhaps, if you've just got a moment to spare," he observed, as though he were showing us one of the rare specimens in a museum, "there's something that will interest you. That's Sir Harvey Joyce's vault. The last time it was opened was ten years ago when old Sir Stephen died."

He rubbed the roots of his beard, and shook his head, lowering his voice wickedly, as he had done when hinting at scandal about the Colonel.

"I could tell you a good story about him," he said, his eyes blinking round at us.

He paused and shook his head reminiscently.

"They say Sir Stephen was a wild man, Mr Foley," suggested my friend, trying to draw him.

"Ah, never mind, never mind," Mr Foley snapped hurriedly, with another sudden change of expression, as though he feared some of his secrets were going to be stolen from him, and he led the way in a series of short-sighted stumbles in the direction of the old church.

Before long, he pulled us up again without warning, and pointed to a corner of the churchyard where the enclosing wall had a rather new look.

"Do you see that?" he squeaked at us. "Well, just where you see that new bit of wall, there were three rebels hung from a tree at the time of the

Rebellion. They were buried at the foot of the tree where they were hung; but that's not the best part of the story. Perhaps you heard the story from me before, Mr Ward? A year or two after that, there was a most tremendous storm that blew down the tree, and a good lump of the wall beside it. They gave the building of the wall to some fool of a fellow, and what did he do but put the new wall away round the far side of the piece of ground where the old tree used to be! I tell you," he tittered, glancing from one to the other of us with what seemed like enthusiasm, "when James Henry was looking for a place to put his wife a couple of years ago, little he knew he would be putting her where she would be lying among rebels—rebels that had died with the rope round their necks too!"

His face beamed with delight, and his foolish little ball of a stomach shook with laughter.

"James didn't know, but I knew!" he crowed. "I tell you young gentlemen, sometimes when I drop into his shop for a bit of a chat with him, I find myself thinking, 'My bold fellow, if I had a mind, I could tell you something would make you laugh with the other side of your mouth!' Ay, James is a hearty laugh, but, maybe, if he knew the company his wife was keeping— Well, there's a lot of queer things about a place like this nobody knows except an old fellow like me that makes a kind of a hobby of it. . . ."

It was time to go, however, and we interrupted

him to say how sorry we were that we had to go away before he had shown us where Myles the Proud was buried.

"Ah, well," he commented a little contemptuously, as he shook hands with us, "there's not much to see, any way. Some say he was buried on the far side of the gable of the old church over yonder, and some say it was a man of the same name was buried there, and that Myles the Proud isn't buried in this graveyard at all. Anyway, I never could take much interest myself in them old Irish chiefs that died three or four hundred years ago. They were wild, savage fellows. . . . Did I ever tell you, Mr Ward," he suddenly broke back into subjects more worthy of a civilised man's interest, "what Colonel Finch-Bellew said to me up at the Castle the day he was leaving for South Africa? . . ."

We did not allow him to get out his story, but thrust our good-byes and our gratitude on him with as little rudeness as possible, and leaving him blinking and wheezing on his long trembling legs, we made hurriedly for the gate.

He called after us shrilly that, if ever I was in the town again, and wanted to know anything about the old churchyard, I must pay him a visit, for there were all sorts of interesting things about the graves and the people who were buried in them that nobody but himself knew.

CHAPTER XX

LITERATURE AND MUSIC

IRELAND is at present sending forth two streams of literature—one in Irish and one in English. The literature in English is, so far, the richer in fulfilment, but the literature in Irish is the richer in promise, because in it Ireland is taking a first step towards the resumption of the normal and traditional way of her national life.

The literature which Mr W. B. Yeats, A. E., J. M. Synge and others have been producing, however, comes nearer to being an artistic expression of the national life than any previous literature written in the English language. Never before was there a school of writers in Anglo-Ireland who worked out new artistic methods for themselves and whose work could not be matched and beaten by the same kind of work in English literature. Hitherto the greatest Irishmen who had written in the English language had been inspired, not by artistic, but by propagandist motives. Thomas Davis was the prophet and journalist of nationality in the middle of last century, and the artistic quality in his work was only occasional and accidental. John Mitchel, a greater writer though

not so great a thinker, wrote a splendid and war-like prose, as readers of "The Jail Journal" and "The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)" know. But he too was preoccupied with immediate facts and necessities rather than with the permanent things which are the material of literature. Mangan stands out among his contemporaries of the Young Ireland movement as the only man who was at once a fine patriot and, in the best sense of the words, a fine artist. His greatest poems are in their substance patriotic—"Dark Rosaleen," "O, woman of the piercing wail" and "Kathaleen ni Houlihán," to name three of them: they expressed, however, not the patriotism of the period, but the patriotism of all time. They were not poems merely of Young Ireland: they were poems of the Ireland which abides. Some people would put Sir Samuel Ferguson's work near Mangan's, but Ferguson's poems seem to me to be the expression of a noble talent rather than of imaginative genius.

Young Ireland, it must be said, played a great part in Irish literature as a forerunner. Mr Yeats and his contemporaries built their self-conscious literature largely on foundations which had been prepared by the writers of Young Ireland. Critics see in Mr Yeats's poetry the influence of Blake and the influence of Swinburne, but these are only accidental. Mr Yeats found his inspiration in an Irish imaginative atmosphere, in the lives of Irish people, in the manifestations of beauty in

Irish places, and not in the books of dead poets. He may not have altogether mirrored Ireland in his works, but he made Ireland mirror himself. This means simply, I suppose, that he is lyrical rather than dramatic in his inspiration.

No Irish writer before him had used the English language so beautifully. He strove after perfection in his verse as Stevenson strove after perfection in his prose. He invented new rhythms no less than new images, and gave the imagination a new world of ecstasy in which to wander. He is sometimes accused of being vague and ethereal, but, as for vagueness, this is rather in the minds of his readers who find themselves in unfamiliar places and among names with hidden meanings. One or two of his poems, I know, are obscure, and a few of them bring their meaning to the imagination rather than to the intellect, like a snatch of song in the wind. His work can only be said to be ethereal in quality, however, if it is less ethereal to see the world in the bravery of the sun than to see it in the dim approach of evening, with no light burning but the lights of candles and, later, of the moth-like stars. On the other hand, Mr Yeats's dim twilight atmosphere is heavy with appeals to the senses: his dreams are passionate dreams, and it is a puzzling matter that so ecstatic a worship of the beauty of the body as his should even have been labelled with the word ethereal.

I do not wish to attempt in this chapter anything like a criticism of contemporary Irish

literature, but only to hint at the extent to which a literature of magic and, beside it, a literature of realism have been growing up in Ireland during recent years. I do not think that the world has yet realised the originality and depth of Mr Yeats's genius. His revelation of beauty seems to me to be larger and more intimate than that of Keats, if one revelation of beauty may be compared in intensity with another. Measured by him, Tennyson is a mere maker of phrases and Swinburne a mere maker of sounds. Mr Yeats has the intellectual faculty of condensation, though perhaps not of construction on a great scale. He is a master of new lyric forms. He does not express splendour of personality in his work, in the degree that Whitman or Hugo or Shelley did, but he expresses splendour of vision such as none of these three, save Shelley, expressed. He is the poet of intoxication : he is intoxicated with the quest for the secret rose of beauty—the rose of the beauty, not of the spirit, but of this world. His delight in the immediate beauty of things is as nothing compared with his passionate craving for the beauty of the unattained. The banners of East and West are but symbols proclaiming the separation between him and the desire of his heart. His poetry often gives us the feeling of pessimism, because this beauty which he seeks is in so largely a beauty of this world—a beauty which the senses can apprehend. Immortal beauty itself seems to reveal itself most fully to him in the form of the beloved. It

is out of the separation not from immortal, but from mortal, beauty that that exquisite poem, "The Folly of Being Comforted," is born—the poem which ends :

But, heart, there is no comfort, not a grain ;
 Time can but make her beauty over again,
 Because of that great nobleness of hers ;
 The fire that stirs about her, when she stirs
 Burns but more clearly. O she had not these ways,
 When all the wild summer was in her gaze.
 O heart ! O heart ! if she'd but turn her head,
 You'd know the folly of being comforted.

Mr Yeats, indeed, is the poet of passionate love beyond all his contemporaries. It is the wistfulness of the lover, not of the mystic, that runs through all his best work. And that, perhaps, is all the better for his art.

A. E. (Mr George Russell), who is sometimes—but wrongly—looked on as belonging to the same school of poetry as Mr Yeats, is a real mystic who moves with rapture amid this world of appearances. His is the divine vision—the vision which enables him to hold converse with the gods and to live gladly. There is no man in Ireland with a larger utterance—none who expresses a more sincere and buoyant personality. He, like Mr Yeats, is a lover of symbols, but his heart is set on the eternal things. He does not intoxicate us with beauty as Mr Yeats does, but he imparts to us something of the peace of God. His work has strength and sweetness—something that we might call spiritual

heroism. He is emphatically one of the great men of contemporary Ireland. Lately, I may note in passing, he has been turning to painting rather than poetry.

Mr Pádraic Colum, among the younger writers, is the poet of the earth and the men and women who labour it—also, perhaps, of the men and women who wander between the earth and the sky, unsettled tramps, but with simple desires for settled comforts. He is a figure-painter, or rather, if the word is permissible, a character-painter, whose work is informed with philosophic dignity. He seems to have abandoned poetry for prose lately, but his prose sketches take us into the same atmosphere of fields and fire-sides which we find in the poems in his “Wild Earth,” that beautiful and interpretative volume.

Mr James Stephens’s “Insurrections” is the first expression of realism in Anglo-Irish verse. His people are the people of the towns—cabmen, the population of public-houses, grotesque and battered people. He is humorous, whimsical, upsetting, grim. Mr Seosamh Mac Cathmhaoil in “The Mountainy Singer” gives us a curious mixture of the fairy and the fighting man. He would be content enough with the company of the fairies, we feel, if it were not for the stranger—the Black Earl over the Sea—who makes Ireland desolate. It is the thought of this that rouses him to a fire of prophecy in many of his finest poems, but even here we have gentle and pleasant

music. Mr Seamus O'Sullivan's lyrics have a quality which is less easy to define. The best of them are little passing things of beauty captured in exquisitely careful verse.

Mr J. M. Synge, who died recently, had something of the poetic inspiration, but his rare and interesting genius expressed itself best in the dramatic form. His dramas are wonderful decorations rather than interpretations—revelations of a temperament rather than revelations of the world or of Ireland. In his early enthusiasm, when he first began to write about Ireland, he seemed to get near the large and simple and elemental things in the people around him, and in "Riders to the Sea" he gave us a tragic rearrangement of life whose appeal is universal and which is written in imaginative prose of a texture without an exact parallel in literature. His other plays bear the mark of the same grotesque and decorative genius, but it becomes more and more an eclectic genius consciously using the life with which it comes in contact as the material for art rather than leaping, like a fire, out of experience and knowledge as the genius of the great dramatists seems to do. His dialogue, with its haunting rhythms, its figures, its harsh accidents of realism, offers a new experience in literature to those who read it for the first time. Whether, in his later plays, like "The Playboy of the Western World," it was not becoming too remote from ordinary speech, too like a mosaic of strange things instead of being itself a living and

woven piece of strangeness, is a question which disturbs some of those who know his work best. His was a strange and lonely genius—a genius with something sinister in it, a genius of dark comedy and of byways. Like Mr Yeats, he brought to Ireland a high artistic ideal, a reverence for form, the value of which in a country seeking after new ways of self-expression in literature can scarcely be exaggerated.

Of Irish novelists Mr George Moore is the most notable; but his distinctively Irish work, suggestive and intellectual though it is, is not comparable in structure or in insight to “*Esther Waters*,” his masterpiece, and, indeed, one of the masterpieces of his time. Mr George A. Birmingham is a critical and humorous novelist rather than a novelist of character. His “*Benedict Kavanagh*” gives us the most interesting and interpretative glimpse we have had in fiction of the new Ireland, the Ireland of the Gaelic League. Mr Birmingham has a measure of Mr Shaw’s faculty for analysing points-of-view, and he has a fine wit as well as a genius for farcical comedy. The best of recent historical novels is Mr William Buckley’s Ninety-eight story, “*Croppies Lie Down*.” Mr Standish O’Grady brings something of the Homeric spirit into Anglo-Irish literature with his heroic prose in “*In the Gates of the North*,” his glorious retelling of the story of Cuchullain and the long fight at the ford. Mr Shan Bullock’s truthful idylls of northern life

have not yet won the praise they deserve. But the list of contemporary Irish novelists, good and bad, could be prolonged through pages.

Lady Gregory's and Dr Douglas Hyde's translations of Irish stories and songs are already well-known among those who care for what is best in literature. Mrs Mary Hutton's blank-verse translation of "The Táin,"—the Cuchullain epic—has not so wide a reputation, but it is a strongly-constructed and noble piece of work. Among historians, the most brilliant and original of contemporary writers is Mrs A. S. Green, whose "The Making of Ireland and its Undoing" is a powerful plea for a complete reconsideration of the materials from which Irish history has hitherto been written.

Irish literature in the Irish language is a subject which I will not discuss at length, because Irish is unfortunately a language of which I can as yet make but a limping and stammering use. It may be as well to say here, however, that Ireland has never ceased producing literature in the Irish language during all the turmoil of the centuries down to the present day. Raftery was a nineteenth-century poet, and only a few years ago Colum Wallace, an aged poet who knew no English, was recovered from the workhouse in Oughterard by some members of the Gaelic League. Since the Gaelic League came into existence, Irish books, booklets, sketches and articles have been published in great numbers. Father O'Leary's "Séadna"

is at once the longest and the most popular of the new books. It is a haphazard mixture of folk-tale and scenes from common life, told largely in the form of dialogue. It is written with many pleasant touches of humour, and is rich in the idioms of the countryside.

Pádraic Ó Conaire is one of the few writers who are using the Irish language, not to re-tell old stories, but to express the realities of contemporary life. He has written several plays, a short novel and a great number of short stories. He is a lover of facts, however cruel they may be, and is an enemy of the sentimentalists. His best stories read like transcripts from life, thus fulfilling the Ibsenic idea of what imaginative literature ought to be. Conán Maol is another writer of stories and historical sketches who has a high reputation in Irish Ireland. He has a strong and whimsical personality and uses words with literary dignity. Pádraic Mac Piarais has given us in "Íosagán" and other slender books a number of stories with a great deal of sentimental charm. It would be wrong to omit from a list of Irish writers the name of Dr Douglas Hyde, the President of the Gaelic League, whose books on Raftery, on the Love-Songs of Connacht and similar subjects, he has himself turned into English. Among a host of other writers I will only mention Father Tomás Ó Ceallaigh, who has translated Mr W. B. Yeats's "Kathleen ni Houlihán" into Irish and has written a number of plays as well. The tendency

in Irish circles, I may say, is in an increasing degree to insist upon authors giving the folk-tale and the fairy-tale a rest for a time and bringing literature into relation with modern experience and the modern spirit.

To turn for a moment to Irish music, I am afraid I must dismiss it in even fewer sentences than those in which I have summed up—or rather hinted at—the present position of Irish literature. The Irish music which I like best myself is the old Irish music, the music of the songs, such as has been collected and published in recent years by Dr P. W. Joyce, Mr Herbert Hughes and others. Mr Hughes, in his last collection, “Irish Country Songs,” does not profess to put down the songs as he heard them with complete accuracy, for he holds that the traditional Irish singer sings quarter-tones which cannot be recorded by the conventional method of notation. Musicians with fixed ideas, hearing an Irish singer, often think that he is singing flat, when as a matter of fact he is singing with scrupulous exactness according to the Irish way. I have no musical knowledge myself and therefore cannot go into the matter. On the other hand, I have experienced the delight, as in sight and hearing of strange seas, which is to be had in listening to Irish songs sung in the traditional manner without the accompaniment of any instrument. Those who have never heard Irish songs sung except to the accompaniment of the piano have only an incomplete idea either of the graces

or of the emotional subtlety and intensity of Irish music.

It is good news that in many parts of Ireland the people are taking to the fiddle again, where their fathers were content with the melodeon and its crude noises. A great number of boys, too, are learning the bag-pipes. Some of them prefer the war pipes, which are blown by the mouth like the Scotch pipes : others have a keener taste for the union pipes, which are filled by a bellows worked by the player's elbow. The latter is, it may be added, the instrument which is played within houses.

The Féis Ceoil and the Gaelic League have between them done a great deal to encourage the revival of Irish music, and it will be surprising if we have not before long a number of Irish composers drawing their inspiration from national sources. During the past summer, indeed, an Irish opera, "Eithne," by Mr Robert O'Dwyer, was performed at the Gaelic League Oireachtas. The libretto was, of course, in Irish, and the performance was, from all accounts, excellent.

Before closing this very personal and haphazard account of certain contemporary Irish facts, I must express my regret for having said so little about the part played in Irish country life by the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, with its coöperative dairies, its banks, and its other manifold energies. I should have liked, too, to

give a separate account of the work of the Gaelic League. Looking at the social and intellectual changes brought about in Ireland by these two organisations, Irish men and women are naturally growing more and more optimistic with regard to the future. Self-confidence is being gradually restored to the country, and the nation is becoming self-conscious to an extent, and in a manner, which no one would have dared to prophesy twenty years ago. "Ireland has always struck me," says a character in a story of Mr George Moore's, "as a place that God had intended to do something with ; but he changed his mind, and that change happened about a thousand years ago. Since then the Gael has been wasting." Others of us regard those thousand years as at once a preparation and a prophecy—a journeying in the wilderness. Ireland is now, as it were, getting ready to leave the wilderness. She may not yet be clear of all its entanglements and its shadows, but she is assuredly approaching the only possible way out—the way, not of mere political Nationalism, but of nationhood in the fullest and most spiritual meaning of the word.

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